the weekly
Standard

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THE JOY OF IMPEACHMENT
FRED BARNES • TUCKER CARLSON
MATTHEW REES • THE EDITORS

THE BOYFRIEND PROBLEM

by John A. Barnes

Every day, children are endangered by the men in their mothers' lives. But we're not supposed to talk about it.

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Don't Know Much About . . .

New York is revising its state history curriculum for high school students, and the first draft is beyond parody. The last major rewrite, in 1987, contained partisan howlers like a "Dismantling the Great Society" section for the Nixon years and multicultural excesses like tracing the intellectual sources of the U.S. Constitution to the Iroquois Confederacy. Having been held up to ridicule, these parts have been removed in the new draft, according to Thomas W. Carroll, president of the Empire Foundation for Policy Research, a New York think tank that is bird-dogging the rewrite. But sections have been added that are just as egregiously politicized.

The Clinton presidency, for instance, is allotted five times as much space as the Civil War—an unusual decision, to say the least, for a history curriculum. According to Carroll, "The Clinton section highlights the 'social concerns' of health care, education, welfare and Social Security—sounding remarkably like a Dick Morris political ad. In stark contrast, a parallel section under the Bush years is titled 'social *problems*' and includes drug abuse, homelessness, and gang violence—issues that the authors presumably thought disappeared the minute Bill Clinton was elected."

And for those who have been wondering how the Clinton years will go down in the history books? Well, none of the myriad scandals makes it into the draft at all, except for a passing reference to the Senate Whitewater Committee.

The curriculum is now going into a second draft, the writing of which is reportedly being much more carefully supervised by New York State Education Commissioner Richard Mills.

Al Gore's Inspiration

That empty-sounding new Al Gore slogan, "practical idealism," rang a bell with one fan of The Scrapbook, who kindly faxed in the following book excerpt:

"Idealism without pragmatism is impotent. Pragmatism without idealism is meaninglessness. The key to effective leadership is pragmatic idealism." Yes, it's a stirring peroration from that 1990 classic *In the Arena.* Al Gore, meet Richard Nixon, who beat you to the punch.

A Foolish Inconsistency

In a column last week in the *New York Post*, Dan Seligman thoroughly embarrassed the *New York Times* editorial page by comparing its positions on impeachment over the last four months. From the assertion that "the rule of law is too vital to be sacrificed," the *Times* editorialists evolved in a brief few weeks after the election to the position that the "removal of this weak man would impose [a trauma] on the people and the political system." The rub was not that the *Times* had ever insisted Clinton be impeached (it had always favored censure), but that it had once insisted Clinton confess to his perjury as a precondition for censure. Otherwise the "rule of law"—magnetic north for the editorial page's moral compass until the elections—would be dangerously weakened.

When it became clear the president wouldn't confess, however, the *Times* editorialists found themselves painted into a corner. They could have stuck to their principles and pointed out that—absent the presidential confession—"a Congress that gave up on impeachment and opted for mere censure was complicit in his crimes," as Seligman put it, dryly adding: "It is, after all, possible for editorialists to say what they think is right even when they know they won't prevail." Instead, the *Times* suspended its earlier principles and indulged in the pretense that its standards hadn't

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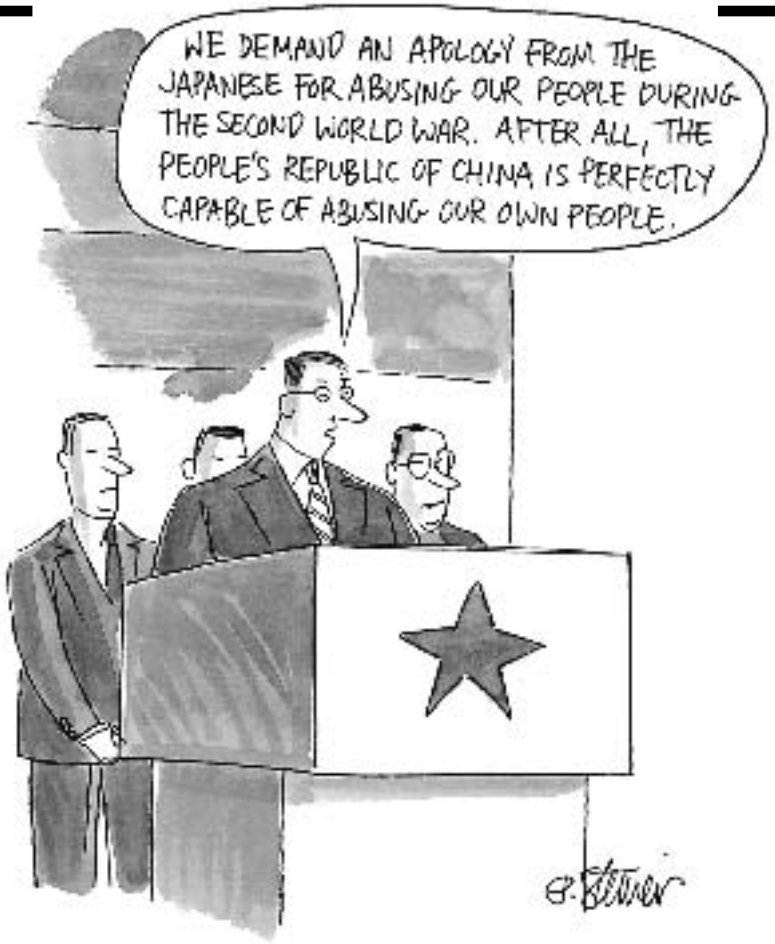

changed at all. The editorial page's position, claimed a Nov. 20 editorial, had proceeded from "the political consensus of the American people." Except that it hadn't. Law and political consensus are not the same thing.

Rewriting history "seems almost self-destructive," Seligman notes, "in an age when Nexis makes it so easy to look up stuff from the past."

Newt's Pork

The soon-to-be-departing Newt Gingrich leaves many legacies for the next Republican Congress to build on. But one of them is a minor scandal. Sometime last year, Gingrich pulled money out of the Pentagon budget to set up yet another interminable, congressionally mandated study of U.S. national security policy. (Do you remember the last congressionally mandated study, the National Defense Panel's report of last year? Don't worry, no one else does either.) The price tag for this new study: $14 million. Let us repeat: $14 million for a national security *study*.

The lucky recipient of that $14 million was Gen. Charles G. Boyd, one of Newt's pals and advisers. Now, Boyd, a decorated veteran and prisoner of war in Vietnam, is not the problem. The problem is that this eye-poppingly expensive study has already been hijacked by the Clinton administration. Top Clinton appointees at the Pentagon have insisted on vetting and approving the study group's analysts and participants. The Scrapbook has heard that the board will include the likes of Gary Hart and Andrew Young. This is an easy one for the next Republican Congress: Cut it! Spend the $14 million on spare parts for some of the Pentagon's crashing helicopters.

Trouble in Paradise

"The Dutch Health Ministry said it would extend an experiment to distribute free heroin to hard-core drug addicts after a three-month pilot scheme showed no serious, undesired side-effects. However, some heroin users complained about the quality of the heroin offered" (*New York Times*, November 25).

The Ultimate Anti-Libertarian Plot

In a Nov. 19 press release, the U.S. Postal Service announced that among the new commemorative stamps released next year will be one honoring Ayn Rand, the sixteenth author to appear in the "literary arts" series.

Say what? It's hard to imagine a more hilarious fate for the author of *Atlas Shrugged* and *The Fountainhead*, who made a cult out of rugged individualism, than to be memorialized by the ultimate symbol of government bureaucracy. Next thing you know, the Washington, D.C., Metro will be renamed the Hayek Public Transit System.

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Casual

The Icon Issue

I like to have a few handsomely misused words going at all times that drive me a little nutty. It's good, I believe, for my blood pressure, which is normally low, but which the American language and people, in their combined genius, often help to raise. For a while, what I thought of as "the flying 'whatever'" was doing this job nicely. This is a "whatever" tossed in whenever a speaker can't be bothered to complete a sentence or answer a question or supply an indirect object or round off a thought. Whatever.

An old standby for me has been the regular misuse of the word "issue." The correct use of this word is the only worthwhile thing I learned from two years of working with the philosopher Mortimer J. Adler, who made a useful distinction among problems, questions, and issues. "A p-problem," he would say, his racing, doubtless appallingly high-I.Q. mind causing him to stutter slightly, "calls for a solution. A qu-question requires an answer. And an issue is something in the flux of con-con-controversy."

For years I took a mild pleasure in listening to television johnnies and janes muddle the distinction, citing a problem as a question, an issue as a question, and everything but a pro-football score and the Dow Jones as an issue. When a man or woman has a salary ten or twenty times greater than your own, all that is left to you, it seems to me, is to hold him or her in contempt for his poor usage, and this I did, on all possible occasions, with a smugness that brought me fleeting but sincere happiness. "It's not an issue at all," I would call out to my television set, "it's a question, you idiot."

But, then, the word "issue" really jumped the tracks and flew completely out of control. The comedian Garry Shandling, quoted in the *New Yorker*, remarked, perhaps partly satirically (then again, perhaps not): "My friends tell me that I have an intimacy issue—but I don't think they know me." In The Weekly Standard—I drape a small black flag over my heart as I report this—I one day read: "Issue-wise, each of these men [four philandering politicians] was always faithful." Issue-wise? Hmm. What can that possibly mean? Whatever.

A student writes in a paper on Joseph Conrad's character Verloc: "Because he has hitherto served adequately in his defined role as provider, he sees no reason to worry further about the issue." I turn to the *New York Times Book Review*, where I find a reviewer describing the heroine of the novel under review: "In other words, Edith's issue with boundaries parallels the problem of nations in a borderless age." One has issues not only with things but with people, as in "I've got issues with her." "Issue" thus leaves the domain of controversy and lovely flux, and becomes merely any disagreement or complaint, and in doing so departs its usefulness as a precise term. So long, "issue"; it was nice knowing you.

But what has happened to "issue" is nothing compared with the current beating that the word "icon" is taking. Beginning life as "a conventional religious image typically painted on a small wooden panel and used in the devotions of Eastern Christians," "icon" now includes the likes of Madonna and Dennis Rodman. "Icon" is, in other words, the status those few outlandishly successful publicity figures achieve when "superstardom" (itself a wildly dubious term) seems no longer sufficient.

"Icon" has also become anything that anyone has at one time or another thought worthy of devotion or loyalty or that is even faintly admired. An actor on *Ally McBeal* writes a letter to the *New York Times* in which he calls Gypsy Rose Lee "the great feminist icon." Tom Wolfe, it turns out, according to the same newspaper, has been artfully "dismantling cultural icons," while Yoko Ono, by pushing more and more of her late husband's recordings and books back on the market, has been responsible for the "packaging of an icon," no doubt with the help of some evil speculator, a type that is "once again a powerful icon."

A University of Chicago professor has written on how "the image of the black woman in the 19th century became a racist icon for deviant sexuality." And then there is Walter Winchell, of whom *TV Guide* asks: "Icon or Hack?" Another academic has written *The Last Dinosaur Book*, in which, the *Atlantic Monthly* reports, "he considers the dinosaur a cultural icon and proposes to describe its 'life and times.'" Put that on a small wooden panel and use it in your worship.

Tocqueville, who was not wrong about many things, said of Americans that we had a weakness for abstract terms, noting that such words "make expression quicker but conceptions less clear. I wonder if vagueness may not have a secret charm for talkers and writers in these lands. Democratic citizens," he continued, "will often have vacillating thoughts and so language must be loose enough to leave them play."

No dope, Tocqueville, and no freakin' icon, either.

Joseph Epstein

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No Defense of Pinochet

When a judge convicts a criminal, that's law and order; but when a judge proceeds against a world-class murderer, that's "judicial activism" run amok, at least according to Jeremy Rabkin ("First They Came for Pinochet," Nov. 23).

Rabkin objects to governments' recent moves to bring the world's worst human rights criminals to justice. He begins with the tired defense that such prosecutions violate "sovereignty," which he calls the "central premise of international law." Rabkin seems oblivious to the many treaties on human rights and humanitarian law adopted over the last half century. These widely ratified treaties impose strict limits on how governments can treat their citizens.

They also impose a duty to bring violators to justice. Rabkin asserts that this duty applies only to a government's own violators. But the Geneva Conventions, which define war crimes, require governments to bring offenders to justice "regardless of nationality." Nothing in the Genocide Convention—or other human rights treaties—suggests otherwise. Nor is there a hint, as Rabkin claims, that prosecutions must be conditioned on the consent of the targeted government.

Rabkin argues that the pursuit of justice will impede democratic transitions in Chile and elsewhere. But Chile's president felt sufficiently confident in the strength of Chilean democracy that he left the country at the height of the Pinochet drama on a nine-day trade mission. Dictators cede power not because they are born-again democrats, but because their domestic and international support has waned. Prosecutions, by delegitimizing tyrants, can hasten that process. They can also discourage future despots from replicating slaughter.

Rabkin is most concerned about the possibility that Americans might face international justice. Because it is not U.S. policy to commit genocide, war crimes, or crimes against humanity, that fear is overblown. Rabkin conjures up various scare scenarios of pariah states seeking the extradition of U.S. officials. But extradition requests are routinely denied when a requesting state's justice system cannot be trusted. Italy, for example, recently rejected Turkey's extradition request for a murderous rebel leader because of Turkey's record of torture and execution.

The best way to regularize justice across national boundaries is to launch the International Criminal Court agreed to last summer by 120 governments. Indeed, delegates adopted a U.S.-proposed definition of the crime of launching an attack that causes disproportionate harm to civilians which, contrary to Rabkin's assertion, would preclude prosecution for an attack like this summer's misguided bombardment of a Sudanese pharmaceutical plant. Unfortunately, the Clinton administration, wedded to Rabkin-like

thinking, remains virtually alone among its allies in opposing this court. It should reconsider.

Kenneth Roth
Executive Director
Human Rights Watch
New York, NY

Jeremy Rabkin's musings on the tyranny of international law would have us pitch the baby out with the bath water.

It is a traditional prerogative of sovereign states to protect the lives and interests of their own nationals. Thus, by the most conservative theory, Spain has a right to prosecute the murderers of Spanish citizens abroad. There is no international treaty or customary rule generally immunizing foreign officials involved in those deaths—and in an age of state-sponsored terrorism, I doubt we would want one.

So-called universal jurisdiction—allowing states to prosecute other serious violations of the law of war and humanitarian law—underlies the Yugoslav and Rwandan tribunals set up by the U.N. Security Council in the Hague and Arusha. It is also the jurisdictional basis of the 1949 Geneva Conventions protecting prisoners of war, wounded soldiers, and civilians. It is employed in the 1979 Convention Against Hostage-Taking, and the 1971 Montreal Convention Against Aircraft Sabotage. The consent of the violator's state is not needed for these prosecutions. Would Rabkin wish to abandon these "third party" treaty regimes?

The problem of amnesty in democratic transitions is a serious one, and it has not been given sufficient recognition in the Rome statute for a permanent international criminal court. But a decision by the United Kingdom and Spain to allow the Pinochet case to proceed, if responsibly taken, will consider Chile's political stability. It is a fact of life that countries often say one thing publicly and another privately. Chile's current diplomatic protests must be evaluated in that light.

The keystone of international human rights law is the claim that there is, ultimately, some limit on how states can treat their own citizens. This was a lesson from the Holocaust. It underlies our concern about the mistreatment of Christians abroad. It is a mistake to dismiss this as "fantasy."

Ruth Wedgwood
Professor of Law
Yale Law School
New Haven, CT

Jeremy Rabkin responds: ***Both Kenneth Roth and Ruth Wedgwood articulate the new approach to international law which my article warned against. Both letters deny that there is any enduring customary rule that prohibits the courts of one country from trying the top officials of another country, for acts of the latter in their official capacities and in their own countries. The fact is that of eight British judges to consider this issue in the Pinochet case, five of them thought the traditional rule was***

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still binding (though the three who thought otherwise made up a slim majority of the Law Lords in the last round). The more telling fact is that no previous case like Pinochet's has ever occurred (as Roth and Wedgwood tacitly concede, by failing to cite any such precedent). If, as they claim, there is so much long-standing support for such a prosecution, how is it that not a single one has ever been previously attempted?

Having dismissed the customary rule, Roth and Wedgwood are eager to move on to new authorities. But none of the treaties they cite is at all relevant to this case. Even the Geneva Convention on "Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War" applies by its terms only to "armed conflict between two or more" of the signatory states, whereas Pinochet's actions were entirely internal to Chile. Roth's citation of the Genocide Convention is as irrelevant as Wedgwood's citation of the Convention Against Aircraft Sabotage. And neither bothers to claim that Chile had actually consented, in a clear, formal treaty, to the sort of jurisdiction Spain and Britain have now asserted against Pinochet.

So in the Roth-Wedgwood view, we have abandoned the former bright-line rule against prosecuting top officials of another country, but we do not need to have specific treaty authorizations for such prosecutions, either. What we have, then, is the open-ended discretion of some 150 separate national court systems around the world. Wedgwood assures us that the problem of "democratic transitions" will be "responsibly handled." But why are Spain and Britain more "responsible" in judging what is right for Chile than the elected government of Chile? Will all other countries behave even this "responsibly?" Roth reminds us of Italy's fastidious approach to extradition. But what of China, Malaysia, Algeria, or dozens of other such countries? What happens if an American or Israeli official is seized in one of these countries—with as little forewarning as Pinochet had, when he entered Britain on a VIP basis last October?

International law has historically been concerned with adjusting relations between sovereign states. At bottom, the outlook of Roth and Wedgwood assumes that national courts around the world can now disregard (or freely reinterpret) the sovereign rights of other states and simply act on behalf of "humanity." No doubt, Human Rights Watch and the Yale Law School will be only too happy to advise local judges on what "humanity" requires. But when Bill Cohen or Ariel Sharon is seized in an unexpectedly unfriendly place, the local authorities may decide, after all, that they can decide even more "responsibly" than their would-be tutors in New York and New Haven.

I am not sure that either Roth or Wedgwood would actually side with the U.S. or Israeli defendant in such a case. But I doubt even more that the local authorities in a hostile country would pay close heed to what these sensitive humanitarians advise. According to the U.N. Charter, all sovereign states are equal. Now Spain and Britain—with the eager endorsement of such advocates as Roth and Wedgwood—have told the sovereign states of the world that they have a lot more scope for such ventures than anyone had previously supposed. ♦

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Impeach— Now More Than Ever

At a December 1 House Judiciary Committee hearing on the consequences of dishonest legal testimony, Judge Leon Higginbotham Jr., appearing for the committee's Democrats, suggested that a "per se perjury" trigger for presidential impeachment would be preposterously extreme. What if President Clinton had been pulled over by a policeman for driving slightly faster than a posted 50 mile-per-hour limit, Higginbotham asked the committee? What if Clinton had then perjured himself with false statements that he was only going 49? It would be "grossly improper to impeach a president under such a factual scenario," the judge concluded. And "as to impeachment purposes, there is not a significant substantive difference between the hypothetical traffic offense and the actual sexual incident in this matter" with Monica Lewinsky.

Judge Higginbotham offers an interesting analogy. It deserves to be further developed and refined.

Suppose the president is subject to a civil negligence suit in which his driving record is ruled relevant for discovery. The plaintiff's attorneys catch wind of the fact that Clinton has lately been in the habit of high-speed joy riding with a White House employee, and they announce their intention to question him about it. In response, the president develops a plan to suppress the evidence and lie about this speeding. He discusses such a plan with his employee-passenger, whom he is contemporaneously attempting to place in an out-of-town job, and both of them then carry it out, under oath.

Whereupon—just supposing—this constellation of crimes comes to the attention of a federal grand jury. But in the midst of a resulting national uproar, Bill Clinton angrily denies all allegations of wrongdoing, including the underlying traffic infraction. And then, for seven long months, he falls obstinately silent about the controversy. During which time the president's White House staffers repeat his lies to the grand jury and publicly slander the prosecutors—and Clinton's Justice and Treasury departments impede the investigation's search for truth by litigating unprecedented privilege assertions in the federal district, appeals, and Supreme courts.

Finally, the essential facts established beyond a shadow of a doubt, the president vaguely "apologizes" to the country as a whole, and then falls obstinately silent *again*—while his lawyers and aides continue tortuously to dispute every serious legal charge against him.

This would clearly be no ordinary "traffic offense." Just as the Lewinsky scandal is no ordinary lie "about sex." Many private citizens have been harshly sentenced by the courts for much less, even for perjuries that *are* just uncomplicated lies about sex. Indeed, shortly before Judge Higginbotham's testimony, the Judiciary Committee had heard from two such convicted perjurers, former University of South Carolina women's basketball coach Pam Parsons and former Veterans Administration staff psychiatrist Barbara Battalino. But Higginbotham pronounced their stories "wholly irrelevant" to a proper judgment about Bill Clinton. "You cannot equate the presidency of the United States with a basketball coach from South Carolina," after all; "Ms. Battalino and Ms. Parsons did not receive 379 electoral votes and 47,401,054 (49.3 percent) of the popular vote" for the highest office in the land.

Ah, yes, the genuine case against impeachment in its irreducible, skeletal form: the notion that, because his job is simply too important, the country cannot afford to hold its president strictly accountable either to the law or to previously unquestioned broader standards of official integrity—in other words, that the nation must bend because the president refuses to. With its aroma of royalism, this is a rank and dangerous idea, to be sure. But, alas, many people seem to believe it. And it does make, at least, for a coherent argument. In fact, at this point, neo-royalism is the only coherent argument still available in the president's defense.

And yet it is the one argument that almost none of Bill Clinton's defenders has dared to make in any formal setting. They prefer sophistry instead.

The president, needless to say, is sophistry personified. In his sworn, written response to the Judiciary

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Committee's request for 81 stipulations of fact and evidence, Bill Clinton gives not one inch to objective reality. He declines to acknowledge without equivocation that he is the chief law-enforcement officer of the United States. He reaffirms that he has history's most convenient memory: It fails him still about what happened in crucial conversations he had with Lewinsky and Betty Currie—except that he is sure he said nothing legally incriminating. The president once more insists that he does not believe oral sex is sex. The president reminds the committee that until August he never publicly claimed his relationship with Lewinsky "was not" improper; his previous denials, he proudly points out, were always carefully constructed in the present tense.

And so on. We will presumably hear more such stuff this week from Clinton's attorneys as they make a final presentation to the Judiciary Committee in advance of its impeachment recommendation to the full House of Representatives. The committee's Democrats will no doubt repeat themselves, as well. Ludicrously.

"There is not a shred of evidence anywhere indicating that the president committed any violation of law," ranking minority member John Conyers says. In fact, according to Rep. Jerrold Nadler, there is "no evidence before the committee" at all—none worthy of consideration, that is, since their only information comes from the tainted Kenneth Starr. Rep. Bobby Scott suggests that Clinton may not actually have violated his promise to tell the truth before the grand jury because . . . the testimonial oath was administered by a prosecutor, not by a juror, and it therefore *didn't count*.

All of this is nonsense. As is the now ritualistic Democratic averral that the president, though innocent of impeachable offenses, is nevertheless guilty of some (always unspecified) lesser misdeed, something sufficiently "indefensible" and "absolutely wrong" as to warrant an extra-constitutional "censure" by Congress. Democrats cannot actually believe Bill Clinton's behavior has been "indefensible," else they would not be so maniacally defending it. They cannot believe he has done anything of public consequence that is "absolutely wrong," else they would be supporting the only commensurate public sanction: impeachment.

And if Clinton is not legitimately subject to impeachment—if his worthiness to exercise the authority of a co-equal branch of government is not seriously in question—then Congress, as another co-equal branch of government, has no business institutionally rebuking him in any fashion. If, in their wisdom, the House and Senate determine that Bill Clinton should not be removed from the White House, then they must leave him entirely alone, and instead get on with "more pressing" matters of state, as the saying goes.

Except that there are no more pressing matters of state, because Bill Clinton's worthiness as president is very much in question. The presidency is the sun around which our day-to-day public life and discourse revolve. And this president has not just been caught speeding; he has behaved like a decadent king. Bill Clinton, by his actions in 1998, has demonstrated a bottomless contempt for our written law and common language alike. If he is not impeached by the House and convicted by the Senate, Congress will have voiced a shocking formal judgment that it is acceptable to have such rot at the center of the nation's collective enterprise. The inheritance of American politics and government should never be sold so cheap.

—David Tell, for the Editors

The Myth of GOP Defectors

by Tucker Carlson

If you've been reading the papers recently, you know there is no way the House of Representatives can impeach Bill Clinton. Republicans allegedly don't have the votes. Two days after impeachment hearings began on November 19, representative Peter King of New York announced that not only was he planning to vote against impeachment, perhaps 40 of his Republican colleagues were set to do the same. I'm one of them, said John Porter of Illinois, who went on to raise King's estimate of impeachment-averse Republicans to 50.

In the weeks since, there has been some debate in the press over how many Republicans will actually vote against impeachment, but a virtual consensus holds that the number will be high. Days after his initial prediction, Rep. King told Jack Newfield of the *New York Post* that he personally knew of "15 to 20" Republican members who were "rock solid" opponents of impeachment. By last Thursday, the estimate had changed again, with the *New York Times* and various cable outlets quoting an unnamed but presumably knowledgeable Republican source who pegged the number at 12. Peter King

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was sounding as authoritative as ever. "The vote on impeachment will not pass," he declared.

The nose counting continued. The only problem was, none of it was accurate. In fact, the number of Republican House members who have declared their opposition to impeachment stands, as it has for more than a month, at precisely five: Jack Quinn of New York, Mark Souder of Indiana, and Chris Shays of Connecticut, as well as Porter and King. But what about the dozens, maybe scores of renegade Republicans news stories keep referring to? As it turns out, most of them appear to be Peter King.

It's easy to see how the confusion arose, since what King lacks in corroboration he makes up in vehemence. "Some of the people on Starr's staff," he tells me solemnly, "are definitely political hitmen. These guys get their kicks from indicting politicians. The untrammeled power of a prosecutor is more of a threat to the country than a president who commits perjury in a civil case." Impeachment over the Lewinsky matter "would set a dangerous precedent," King explains. Instead, "the president should definitely be censured" for his lies to the American people. Indeed, says King, Clinton should receive "a full censure and condemnation from the House."

Kevin Chadwick

Peter King

It's not clear exactly what "a full censure and condemnation" is, but according to King, support for it is snowballing. "John Porter keeps telling me he thinks there could be as many as 40 or 50 [anti-impeachment Republicans] once it actually comes to a head," he says. And who is rallying the full-censure-and-condemnation wing of the party? That would be Mike Castle of Delaware, King confides. "Castle is probably doing the most among moderates to see how many [votes] he can get together."

If so, this is news to Castle's office. According to his staff, Castle did once chat with King about censure. But that's it. Somehow, in the retelling, this single phone conversation became a lobbying campaign, then a groundswell. "Someone is going around using my boss's name," says an irritated Castle staffer, who adds that Castle has definitely not decided to vote against impeachment.

Mike Castle isn't the only Republican member to receive credit for a decision he has not yet made. Over the past several weeks, news reports have incorrectly identified half a dozen or more Republicans who supposedly plan to vote against impeachment. Michael Forbes of New York, Nancy Johnson of Connecticut, Brian Bilbray of California, Billy Tauzin of Louisiana, Marge Roukema of New Jersey—all have knocked down rumors that they are on the King Team. Roukema became so exercised when she heard her name paired with King's that she requested air time on CNN to make the case for booting Clinton from office. If the president lied under oath, Roukema explained, "I am certainly inclined to vote for impeachment. I think it's our constitutional obligation."

Why have so few Republicans joined King? The president's provocatively evasive answers to the 81 questions he recently received from Congress are part of the reason. If Clinton had seemed more contrite, says Ken Johnson, political director and press secretary to representative Billy Tauzin, censure might still be an option. "In Louisiana," says Johnson, "we have great affection for repentant politicians. But this guy has not been repentant, he has not been remorseful. He's been belligerent, and that has made it very difficult to find an alternative to impeachment."

Other Republican members simply don't want the trouble that would come with opposing impeachment. Late last month, for instance, the Women's Republican Club in John Porter's home district issued a remarkably bellicose statement demanding that their congressman "cease and desist your inappropriate interference with the due process deliberations of the Judiciary Committee and recant your premature statements that you oppose an impeachment recommendation." Several days later, the conservative weekly *Human Events* ran the pictures of confirmed and suspected anti-impeachment Republicans beneath the headline, "Meet the GOP's Pro-Perjury Caucus." "Can they be brought back into line?" the story asked. "You can let them know how you feel about it by writing and calling their offices at the numbers listed below." A number of talk-radio hosts made similar pitches to their listeners. During the first week in December, says Peter King, "I was getting an average of 150 phone calls an hour. My office had to close the phones down."

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For representative Mark Souder, the heat has been even more intense. A conservative who occupies the same Fort Wayne seat once held by Dan Coats and Dan Quayle, Souder has long been an aggressive critic of the Clinton administration. Last fall, he was one of fewer than 20 Republicans to cosponsor representative Bob Barr's inquiry of impeachment against the president. In January, Souder was among the first members of Congress to call for Clinton (whom he described at the time as a "compulsive liar") to resign over the Lewinsky scandal. Somewhere along the way, however, Souder decided that impeachment (and, for that matter, censure) was a bad idea. It's not clear what happened—Souder was traveling in Russia last week—but his critics weren't waiting to hear the details.

Radio host and former presidential candidate Alan Keyes achieved liftoff, announcing that he planned to "personally join in an effort to make sure that every Republican who votes against impeachment faces a primary challenge that will be well funded and that will make clear the point that people who act without integrity at critical moments, when our constitutional lives are at stake, cannot be excused." In a speech last month to the Indiana Family Institute in Indianapolis, Keyes attacked Souder by name. As it happened, Souder's sister was in the audience and was shocked to hear Keyes urge the crowd of 1,200—many of them current or potential donors to Souder's reelection fund—to call Souder's office and complain about his stand on impeachment. "Alan said that Republicans who are wrong on this basically are jeopardizing our country," says Bill Smith, executive director of the Institute. "It was a bit awkward having Mark's sister with us."

And it got more awkward. Souder's sister promptly called her brother in Washington and reported that Keyes had implied he was a bad Christian for opposing impeachment. Souder was livid. Keyes called Souder's office several days later, reaching his press secretary, Angela Flood. When Flood picked up the phone she was surprised to learn that Keyes was in the process of hosting his radio show, which is broadcast to 80 stations nationally and simulcast on the America's Voice cable network. Flood got angry. Keyes berated her on the air for her boss's views. The calls poured in to Souder's office.

Most Americans may want Clinton as president, but there remains a large and energetic segment of conservative voters who badly want him impeached. Not surprisingly, none of the five Republicans who have declared their opposition to impeachment seems particularly anxious to talk about his decision. "He's spending this week with his family," says a spokesman for Jack Quinn, by way of explaining why the congressman will not be available for comment. John Porter, meanwhile, has spread the word that he opposes impeachment not because he sympathizes with Clinton, but precisely because he is so outraged by the president's behavior. (Interested readers should call Porter's office for an explanation.)

None of this intra-Republican controversy seems to bother Pete King very much. "This is not at the intensity of, for instance, a highway bill," he says. "I'm not sensing that there's any pressure at all. I have not gotten one call from anybody in the leadership." On the other hand, King admits, maybe that's because his strategy has worked. "It's like Syngman Rhee told Richard Nixon: 'Let your enemies think you're crazy and they won't bother you.' I think if they think I'm nuts they'll leave me alone, because I might do something worse."

Tucker Carlson is a staff writer for THE WEEKLY STANDARD.

DEMOCRATS FOR IMPEACHMENT

by Fred Barnes

DEMOCRATIC REPRESENTATIVE VIRGIL GOODE of Virginia—that's rural, conservative, Southside Virginia, in his case—scarcely knows President Clinton. "I've never talked to him except when I went over to the White House for the Christmas party and shook his hand," Goode says. That was in 1997, Goode's first year in Washington. Oh, yes, Goode says, there was one more encounter. That was last summer when he went to a picnic for members of Congress at the White House and shook Clinton's hand again. But he's never discussed policy or politics with the president—or impeachment. Goode may soon be summoned for a chat, now that he's publicly indicated he intends to vote to impeach the president for perjury.

Impeachment Democrats are a small but significant bloc in the House. For every Democrat who defects, Clinton faces the difficult task of picking up another moderate Republican who will vote against impeachment. At the moment, he needs at least 15

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Republicans, 11 to offset the 228-207 GOP majority in the House and 4 more to compensate for the 4 Democrats ready to vote for impeachment. Besides Goode, Gene Taylor of Mississippi says he'll vote to impeach, and colleagues of Ralph Hall of Texas insist he's pro-impeachment. A fourth House Democrat says privately, "If there's a floor vote to impeach, I'll vote for it." Also, Paul McHale of Pennsylvania, the first Democrat to call on Clinton to resign, may back impeachment so long as there's no chance to vote for a tough censure resolution. And there are a handful of others—Chris John of Louisiana, for example—who are seriously considering going against the president. In the end, as many as 8 Democrats may abandon Clinton.

Why would these Democrats defy both Clinton and House Democratic leaders? Two reasons. They are social conservatives outraged by the president's conduct, or they represent Republican-leaning congressional districts where Clinton is loathed. Goode qualifies on both counts. He's a pro-life conservative who routinely bucks the White House and House Democratic leaders. And he's probably the only Democrat who could hold the district between Charlottesville and Danville. Also, there's a comfort factor. For him and a few other Democrats, reelection in 2000 will be far easier if they vote to impeach. Goode had no Republican opponent in 1998. Nor did Chris John. If either votes against impeachment, he will face a Republican foe in 2000.

Given the criteria, the pool of potential pro-impeachment Democrats isn't large. Most social conservatives, pro-lifers especially, have long since migrated to the Republican party. And most of the GOP-leaning House seats, particularly in the South, have already been captured by Republicans. The result: There aren't many Democrats for whom a vote against Clinton makes strong political sense. Even for the few who do represent Republican districts, there's not much grass-roots pressure for impeachment. Representative Charles Stenholm of Texas polled every few days on this issue in his campaign for reelection. At no point, Stenholm says, have more than 39 percent of voters in his conservative, West Texas district favored impeachment. (Roughly half want Clinton to resign, however.) Texas governor George W. Bush, by the way, got nearly 80 percent of the vote in the district. Stenholm got 54 percent.

Stenholm hasn't ruled out voting for impeachment. "I've pretty well made up my mind that serious offenses were committed," he says. "There definitely must be an appropriate punishment. We can't walk away from it and do nothing." Stenholm hasn't decided what that punishment should be. McHale of Pennsylvania, a Bob Casey Democrat who's socially conservative and economically liberal, hasn't either. He's proposed a stinging censure resolution ("a pattern of deceitful and dishonest conduct that was grossly inconsistent with his constitutional obligation"). While inclined to stick with censure, McHale told Tim Russert on *Meet the Press* that he hasn't "foreclosed the possibility of voting for impeachment."

Representatives Gary Condit of California and Collin Peterson of Minnesota might have brought

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some Democrats with them if they'd decided to impeach. But they opted otherwise. They're leaders of the Blue Dogs, the group of 29 moderate and conservative House Democrats. And they were among the 31 Democrats who voted in October for the open-ended Republican version of an impeachment inquiry. Now, they claim Republicans on the House Judiciary Committee haven't made the case for impeachment. "It was incumbent upon them to tell us and tell the American people how this [Lewinsky investigation] connected with the original [Whitewater] investigation," says Condit. "I don't think they did that." Peterson says Republicans have run the inquiry poorly, notably by not calling the proper witnesses. "They haven't brought anything new to the table."

Taylor and Goode didn't need any new evidence. Taylor is a perjury hawk. Former Democratic representative Butler Derrick called him on Clinton's behalf in November, noting that one Democrat had softened his objection to Clinton's conduct. Have you? Derrick asked. "I said no," Taylor says. "I feel like the president intentionally misled—that's perjury," he says. "It's a serious offense punishable by five years in jail. I think it's an impeachable offense." Taylor believes two different messages may be sent, depending on what the House does. One is, "If you've got the right lawyer or you're bright or you're the president, then you can get away with it. That's what happens in Latin America. I don't want to see that happen here." The message Taylor wants to send is, "Perjury is a serious crime, perjury is an impeachable offense, and everyone in this country has to obey the law. Period."

As for Goode, when asked on the House floor a few weeks ago if he could be counted on to vote against impeachment, he replied: "Don't put me down that way." (Goode says Ralph Hall said the same.) His chief concern is "the false statements under oath, both before the grand jury and in the deposition for the Paula Jones case." Goode cites what he calls a "for instance"—Clinton lawyer Bob Bennett's submission of Monica Lewinsky's affidavit denying a sexual relationship with the president. During the deposition, "Bennett asked Clinton if this is true," Goode notes. "Clinton said—and this is a direct quote—'Absolutely.' I don't see how the president wouldn't know Monica Lewinsky's affidavit was false." If Clinton is to ward off impeachment, he'd better have an explanation for Goode.

Fred Barnes is executive editor of THE WEEKLY STANDARD.

LIVINGSTON RULES

by Matthew Rees

THE WHITE HOUSE—supremely confident until two weeks ago that the House of Representatives would not impeach the president—is suddenly on the defensive. Lawyers for President Clinton, reversed themselves last week and decided to appear at the House Judiciary Committee hearing scheduled for December 8. This after White House officials had derided the entire impeachment inquiry as illegitimate. In another astonishing flip-flop, Clinton spokesman Joe Lockhart and House Democratic leader Richard Gephardt called last week for Newt Gingrich to become *more* involved in the impeachment process. For weeks, Gephardt and Clinton aides had loudly complained that Gingrich's involvement was excessive.

There is a simple explanation for these shifts: Administration officials are now terrified the president might actually be impeached. Last month's election returns were supposed to have laid the issue to rest; there were thought to be enough Republican defectors to defeat impeachment. Lately, though, the number of House Republicans breaking ranks has apparently been shrinking, and with at least three House Democrats saying they'll vote to impeach, the once-prevailing wisdom is in doubt. According to a Clinton aide, this change persuaded White House officials to adopt new tactics—including the lawyers' appearance before the committee.

The goal of their testimony is simple: to win over the few House members—Democrats and Republicans—who are wavering between censure and impeachment. According to the Clinton aide, the testimony is likely to be a point-by-point response to the allegations facing the president. Expect the lawyers to be more forthright than they were in answering the 81 questions from Henry Hyde, the Judiciary chairman, and to tone down their criticism of independent counsel Kenneth Starr.

For Republicans, another indication the impeachment pendulum had swung in their direction was the White House's insistence last week that it be given access to reams of documents related to Starr's impeachment referral, Kathleen Willey, and campaign-finance abuses. Hyde immediately questioned this eleventh-hour request, saying in a statement, "I

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hope this latest request by the White House is not intended to delay the committee's proceedings." But all of a sudden, delay makes sense for the White House. After complaining for weeks that the impeachment inquiry was proceeding too slowly, administration officials would be happy to drag it out just enough to postpone an impeachment vote until January, when the Republicans' House majority will be smaller by five. But don't expect this strategy to succeed: Any move to delay an impeachment vote will meet massive protest from House Republicans. Even speaker designate Bob Livingston, who's been loath to express an opinion on the impeachment inquiry, admitted last week that he hopes the committee will finish its work this year.

The most desperate plea of all last week was the request from Gephardt and the White House for Gingrich to effectively take over the impeachment inquiry. "I believe it is incumbent on you," said Gephardt, addressing the speaker, "to provide the leadership necessary to move this process forward." The call fell on deaf ears. The same day, the committee Republicans voted to subpoena materials related to the investigation of Clinton fund-raising abuses.

The first problem was that Republicans saw the request as ludicrous, coming as it did after shrieks from Gephardt and the White House a few months back that Gingrich was controlling the committee. Even had the request been less blatantly political, however, it wouldn't have flown. Gingrich has checked out of Washington. He's spending his time in Georgia and Florida, and his staff says he has handed the impeachment issue over to Livingston. Livingston, meanwhile, declines to interfere with the work of the Judiciary Committee: "Until they complete their business or make a report to Congress, I can't weigh in one way or another, and I won't," he told the *Wall Street Journal*.

The sudden show of vulnerability from the White House makes it all the less likely Livingston will give the Democrats the thing they want: a vote on censure this year. The White House figures a censure vote would take the pressure off some House members—mostly Republicans—to vote for impeachment. But senior House GOP sources say they'd be surprised if a censure vote occurred this year.

Instead, here's what is likely to happen: When the impeachment resolution is introduced in the Judiciary Committee, a committee Democrat will move that a censure resolution also be considered. Hyde will then do one of two things: rule the censure resolution out of order, at which point it will be dead, or allow a vote on the resolution, at which point it will easily be voted down by committee Republicans.

But the Democrats won't stop there. With the support of a few Republicans, they will then try to introduce a censure resolution on the House floor. This too will fail. According to the House's parliamentary procedures, a special resolution, such as one proposing to censure the president, can only be considered if it has the blessing of the Rules Committee. This means the resolution would, in effect, need the support of Livingston, as Rules traditionally follows the speaker. But no one expects Livingston, in his first act as speaker, to

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push the committee to allow a censure vote. Indeed, he would pay a price if he did. When Tom DeLay, the House whip, spoke with an ideologically diverse group of over 40 House Republicans last week, not one of them favored allowing a censure vote.

The climate, in other words, is bad and getting worse for Clinton. Through all the wrangling last week, Republican aides to the Judiciary Committee, led by Thomas Mooney, the general counsel, and Jon Dudas, the staff director, quietly toiled in their Rayburn building offices, drafting the articles of impeachment the committee will consider at the end of the week. The White House and committee Democrats can scream and yell about one procedural matter or another, but the reality is that the impeachment train is chugging right along. And as one Clinton aide grimly admits, "We don't have any leverage to affect this."

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LYING ABOUT DYING

by Wesley J. Smith

WHEN JACK KEVORKIAN APPEARED on *60 Minutes* the Sunday before Thanksgiving to explain his killing of Thomas Youk, a man with Lou Gehrig's disease, Kevorkian justified his crime to Mike Wallace by claiming Youk was scared to death of choking on his own saliva. Wallace, a vocal euthanasia supporter, accepted this excuse at face value rather than digging more deeply. Had Wallace done his job as a journalist and asked a competent doctor about the proper care of patients with Lou Gehrig's disease, the 15 million people who watched Youk die would have learned that the very symptoms he feared most—choking and suffocation—could have been virtually eliminated with proper medical care.

Lou Gehrig's disease, also known as amyotrophic lateral sclerosis (ALS), is the red flag waved most vigorously by propagandists for so-called mercy killing. The media predictably rise to the bait because this neurological disorder is devastating, causing progressive debilitation, paralysis, and death. But it doesn't have to be the excruciating death by choking or suffocation that euthanasia activists often luridly depict. Given the likelihood that the millions of viewers who watched Kevorkian kill Youk almost certainly included patients with the same disease and their families, it was unconscionably cruel of Wallace to allow Kevorkian's propaganda to go unchallenged.

One expert Wallace could have interviewed is Dr. Walter R. Hunter, a medical director of the Hospice of Michigan (located in the county where Kevorkian lives) and chairman of the ethics committee for the National Hospice Organization. Hunter was appalled at the depiction of Lou Gehrig's disease presented on *60 Minutes*. "No one with ALS should be allowed to choke," Hunter told me. "We have medications that control secretions substantially. If more is needed, we can teach the patient's family to use a simple suction device, similar to that used by dentists." But what about suffocation? As the disease destroys the body's muscular ability, the diaphragm weakens, and it becomes progressively harder for patients to breathe. "A small dose of morphine is a godsend to patients experiencing shortness of breath," Hunter says. And it doesn't mean consigning the patient to a drug-induced haze. "I recently started a patient with late-stage ALS on morphine," Hunter says. "She is the wife of an anesthesiologist. He was worried about that and the slowing of her breathing. But once we started with the morphine, he couldn't believe how comfortable it made her. The key is to find a doctor who is an expert in such care."

Morphine isn't always necessary to treat breathlessness in patients with Lou Gehrig's disease. There are other palliatives, too, including a machine that forces air up the patient's nostrils to make breathing easier. According to Hunter and other experts, with proper treatment, no ALS patient should feel that they are suffocating. Nor should they choke. Indeed, the British physician, Dame Cicely Saunders, the creator of the modern hospice movement, has written that she has treated hundreds of patients with Lou Gehrig's disease, and not one of them choked or suffocated to death. Indeed, Hunter says, in the typical progression of the disease, "the body is unable to clear carbon dioxide from the blood. There is a slow buildup and the patient sleeps more often. Death comes in the patient's sleep. It is quite gentle and painless."

I can vouch for that. It is how my good friend Bob died of Lou Gehrig's disease—peacefully, in his sleep. Bob was my most recent patient at a hospice where I volunteer. Once a week, for about a year and a half, I visited Bob for several hours. During that time, he did begin to feel breathless. To treat his discomfort, he was prescribed the breathing-assistance machine, which did not extend his life but eliminated the feeling of suffocation. Toward the end of his life, he also used

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small doses of morphine. People like Bob are the ostensible beneficiaries of the euthanasia movement. But Bob despised it. I remember his anger in January 1997, after *Nightline* aired a program about a Rhode Island patient with ALS who was asking for assisted suicide. (He too, would later die naturally and peacefully.) Bob was devastated by the program. He put it to me this way: "They are trying to push me out of the well-lit boulevard into the dark alleys. They make me feel like a token presence in the world."

After Bob became ill, he began to write a novel, first by hand and when that became physically impossible, by dictation to a computer. So when he asked me what he should do about the *Nightline* show, the answer was clear. "You're a writer," I said. "A writer writes." Bob's article, "I Don't Want a Choice to Die," was published in the February 19, 1997, *San Francisco Chronicle*. "Too many people," he wrote, "have accepted the presumption that an extermination of some human lives can be just. . . . Where has our sense of community gone? True, terminal illness is frightening, but the majority of us overpower the symptoms and are great contributors to life. . . . In my view, the pro-euthanasia followers' posture is a great threat to the foundation on which all life is based. And that is hope. I exhort everyone: Life is worth living, and life is worth receiving. I know. I live it every day."

Bob, like millions of other disabled and terminally ill people, lived fully and with dignity until his natural death. The facts of their lives and deaths are not far to seek, and are routinely lied about by the likes of Kevorkian. Mike Wallace and *60 Minutes* could easily have found that out. But they were apparently too busy congratulating themselves for their supposed journalistic courage to do so.

Wesley J. Smith, an attorney for the International Anti-Euthanasia Task Force, is the author of* Forced Exit: The Slippery Slope from Assisted Suicide to Legalized Murder *(Times Books).

Russia's Lost Lioness

by David Aikman

Galina Starovoitova was a brilliant and memorable member of Russia's Duma. To admirers, she was a lioness, fiercely defending Russia's ethnic minorities from the tyranny of surrounding majorities. She championed decency in the face of all forms of bigotry, and grasped the folly of attempting to replace Russia's stuttering market economy with a new variant of state socialism. To political enemies with twisted purposes, she posed a mortal threat.

Late on the night of November 20-21, her enemies settled their scores with Starovoitova. She had just returned from Moscow to St. Petersburg and made her way along the Griboyedova Canal, then turned into the stairwell of her apartment building, when unknown assailants, using a silencer-equipped Agran-2000 submachine gun, shot her in the throat and chest, killing her instantly, and critically wounded an aide, Ruslan Linkov. The killers' work was the darkest stain on Russia's ailing democracy in the seven years since the collapse of the Soviet Union.

Starovoitova was not the first member of Russia's parliament to be murdered in cold blood: She was the sixth in five years. What made her murder different from the others (though all of them were ugly) was its political nature. The other slain Duma members all had offended criminal gangs in disputes over commerce. Starovoitova had none of the personal business interests that have ensnared other politicians in conflicts with the ruthless underworld. Instead, she represented the power of outrage mobilized against the corruption that has distorted capitalism in Russia.

This fall, with a noisy and bitter campaign underway for municipal legislative elections on December 6, Starovoitova worked to unite the city's fractious democrats against a rotten political establishment. The Moscow newspaper *Noviye Izvestia* reported that at the time of her death she was in possession of telephone transcripts that clearly incriminated the city's Communist governor, Vladimir Yakovlev, in dealings with the mafia. There had been five contract killings in St. Petersburg in the previous seven weeks. Many speculated that Starovoitova might have been shot on the orders of corrupt politicians who knew that, if the democrats prevailed at the polls, a massive municipal house cleaning would follow. Be that as it may, Russia's Communist and nationalist extremists had been eager to see her removed from the scene.

The estimated 20,000 mourners who filed past the casket at her funeral in the Alexander Nevsky Lavra Monastery were a virtual who's who of Russian democrats, including former prime ministers Yegor Gaidar and Sergei Kiriyenko, privatization chief Anatoly Chubais, and the leader of Yabloko, the Duma's largest democratic party, Grigory Yavlinsky. Gaidar blamed the murder on "nazis and fascists," while

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Chubais fingered the Communists. "Everything she did," he declaimed bitterly, "she did to make sure this ideology would never triumph again."

That was certainly true. The causes Starovoitova embraced were an honor roll of democratic political engagements in the waning years of communism and the start-up years of freedom. She won election to the Congress of People's Deputies in 1989 as a write-in candidate on behalf of the Armenians, whose plight in the Nagorno-Karabakh enclave within Azerbaijan she championed. She quickly joined forces with Nobel laureate Andrei Sakharov in the Supreme Soviet. She staunchly supported Boris Yeltsin, as he worked to bring to life an independent, sovereign Russian state within Gorbachev's Soviet Union in 1991. Providentially absent on a trip to England during the abortive Soviet army coup in August of that year, she lobbied Margaret Thatcher to come out in support of the embattled Yeltsin in the Russian White House. Other causes followed. When the Duma voted to enact a reactionary law restricting religious freedom in Russia in 1997, Starovoitova fought it harder than almost anyone. Just weeks before her murder, she sharply attacked the Communist members of the Duma—that body's largest faction—for refusing to censure one of their own, General Albert Makashov, for a vicious anti-Semitic outburst. Unabashed by the presence of TV cameras, a red-faced Makashov had sneered, "I will round up all the [Jews] and send them to the next world!"

AP/Wide World Photos

Galina Starovoitova

Russia's crisis has been with us so long that many in the outside world take it for granted. The economic collapse, the declining life expectancy (down to 34 years in the far-north Chukotka region), the almost routine and seldom-punished gangland murders, Yeltsin's endless illnesses, the pugnacious xenophobia of the Duma's Communists and nationalists—all of these seem to have gone on for years. To some observers, they suggest disturbing parallels with Weimar Germany, that feckless and decadent regime whose failure led to Hitler's ascendancy in 1933. One manifestation of Russia's Weimar tendencies is the rise of street-level anti-Semitism, either winked at or promoted by members of the Duma. The Communists have been among the worst offenders. Against this backdrop, the brazen assassination of democratic politicians determined to stand against the nationalists is ominous. The murders of Japan's prime minister Takashi Hara in 1921 and of Germany's foreign minister Walther Rathenau the following year proved landmarks on the road to militarism in the 1920s.

A few weeks before she was murdered, Starovoitova observed in a moment of pained reflection that "the way to freedom [had] turned out to be far harder" than she and her democratic allies had expected. At her funeral, fellow Duma member (and former Russian ambassador to the United States) Vladimir Lukin echoed her disillusionment. "No one expected," he said, "that it would take so much courage to carry on the struggle honorably and to stand up for our ideals."

Galina, or Galya as her friends called her, impressed new acquaintances with her forthrightness and passion. On our first meeting, at her Moscow office ten years ago, I was amazed by her voluble and unselfconscious conviction that democracy, decency, and compassion for all human beings, regardless of their origin or condition, were, well, simply *right*. After a long-uninterrupted diet of Soviet lies, these sentiments from a Russian politician were sheer balm to the spirit. How could Russia, emerging from that era of bombastic falsehood, I wondered, produce such a wonderful disciple of freedom?

In due course, Galina Starovoitova will merit a biography that helps answer this question. She was, of course, a martyr for democratic principles. But it is also worth noting that, in an unpublicized move a few months before her death, she was received into the Russian Orthodox Church, a convert from Soviet-era agnosticism, making her a martyr in an even deeper sense.

Her death may prove to be the bell that tolls for Russian democracy—or it could have the opposite effect, galvanizing Russia's dwindling and demoralized democratic politicians into burying their petty squabbles and rescuing their nation from chaos. If that should turn out to be the case, Starovoitova would certainly reckon the price she paid to have been worth it.

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Guilty as Charged

by Arnold Beichman

It is hard to imagine a sadder group of people than the children of Americans who spied for the Soviet Union. I am thinking of the two sons of Julius and Ethel Rosenberg, the son of Alger Hiss, and now Harry Dexter White's two daughters, who in a recent letter to the *New York Times Book Review* rebuke a reviewer for referring to their father, a high-ranking Treasury official under Roosevelt and Truman, as a Soviet agent.

What a tragedy the end of the Cold War has been for the kids and grandkids of the spies. How do they talk to their children about Grandpa and Grandma? If there were today a glorious Soviet socialist paradise, treason at least might be rationalized: Father tried to help create a better world. But history has rendered its verdict on Stalin's American agents: They served a monster, their so-called socialism was a fraud, and the USSR? Gone forever. Until a few years ago, the Rosenberg sons toured the land proclaiming to friendly audiences their parents' innocence. Then the National Security Agency declassified what have become known as the "Venona" transcripts, secret messages between Soviet KGB officers reporting on their American informants in the 1930s and 1940s, intercepted and decoded by American cryptanalysts.

These decoded messages confirmed what had already been proven in American courtrooms, namely the treachery of Hiss and the Rosenbergs. But worse was yet to come for the true believers. With the fall of the Soviet Union in 1991, Soviet KGB archives suddenly became accessible to sophisticated students of the Communist movement in America. These archives confirmed and amplified what "Venona" had shown. Through his American spies, Stalin in effect had installed a giant "bug" letting him listen in to the White House, the Treasury and State Departments, the Manhattan Project, the office of Vice President Henry Wallace, and the Office of Strategic Services, our wartime intelligence agency. And yes, Harry Dexter White was one of those spies.

The daughters of White (who died in 1948, just prior to a scheduled appearance before a congressional committee) charge that the *New York Times* reviewer, Sam Tanenhaus, "vilified" their father as a Soviet agent on the basis of unsupported allegations of a 1945 Russian defector, Igor Gouzenko. Tanenhaus, an editor of the *New York Times* op-ed page, is the author of a well-received biography of Whittaker Chambers, who with Elizabeth Bentley was the first to identify White as a Soviet spy in the late 1940s.

Despite the protestations of the White sisters, the evidence against their father is not based on Gouzenko's revelations. In their forthcoming book *Venona: Decoding Soviet Espionage in America* (Yale University Press), Harvey Klehr and John Haynes argue that of some 50 Americans known to have spied for Stalin (many more have never been identified), Harry Dexter White was probably the most important agent. The Venona intercepts revealed that at the 1945 conference in San Francisco founding the United Nations, White met with a Soviet KGB officer and informed him of the U.S. negotiating position on a number of issues. (White's KGB code name was at various times "Lawyer," "Richard," and "Reed.") Another KGB message noted that White was thinking of resigning his high Treasury post and entering the private sector because he needed more income to pay one of his daughters' college tuition. White was regarded as so important to the Kremlin that his handlers proposed to pay the tuition so White could remain at Treasury.

HARRY DEXTER WHITE'S DAUGHTERS INSIST THEIR FATHER WAS NOT A SPY. BUT HE MAY HAVE BEEN STALIN'S MOST IMPORTANT AGENT.

Further evidence of White's treason, gleaned from Soviet archives, will be published next month in a book by Allen Weinstein and Alexander Vassiliev, *The Haunted Wood: Soviet Espionage in America—The Stalin Era* (Random House). Weinstein's *Perjury* was the definitive account of Alger Hiss's career as a spy; Vassiliev is a former Soviet journalist and KGB operative. According to the book, White assisted Harold Glasser, a Treasury executive and KGB spy, "in obtaining posts and promotions at Treasury while aware of his Communist ties." Because of White's backing, Glasser survived an FBI background check. In sum, there can be no doubt that "Harry Dexter White was a Soviet agent," as senator Daniel Patrick Moynihan pronounced with finality November 26 on *NewsHour With Jim Lehrer*.

It will not be surprising, though, if his daughters keep protesting his innocence. As Saul Bellow once said, "a great deal of intelligence can be invested in ignorance when the need for illusion is deep."

Arnold Beichman, a research fellow at the Hoover Institution, is working on a biography of former vice president Henry A. Wallace.

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The Boyfriend Problem

By John A. Barnes

On the night of February 23, 1997, Dallas paramedics were summoned to the apartment that Dionne Pickens shared with her son, 2-year-old Devonta, her daughter, 8-year-old Deandrea, and her boyfriend of two months, 25-year-old Abdullah Youself Blackmon. Little Devonta Pickens was unconscious. Blackmon claimed the boy had fallen into a wooden bed railing.

A quick examination showed that couldn't possibly be true. The boy's 30-pound body was covered with welts, including no fewer than five sites of blunt-force trauma to the head. Medical examiners said later the injuries were comparable to what a person would receive in a severe car wreck. Devonta never regained consciousness and soon died.

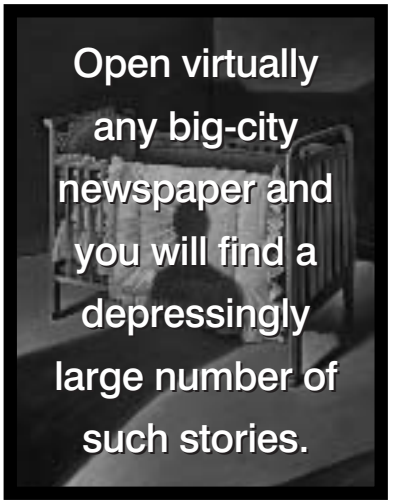
At his trial, Blackmon admitted hitting the boy but not intending to kill him. He also admitted beating Deandrea earlier in the evening. What had prompted his homicidal rage against the 2-year-old? The latter, he said, had wet his bed.

While all this was going on, the children's mother was in the next room. At some point, Dionne Pickens testified, she no longer heard Devonta crying but continued to hear the belt striking the child.

The jury wasn't buying the idea that Devonta Pickens's death was an accident. Blackmon was convicted on October 2, 1998, and sentenced to life in prison, of which he must serve at least 40 years before becoming eligible for parole.

Just two days after Blackmon's conviction, 3-year-old Ashley Smithson of Miami was disconnected from the life-support machines that had been keeping her alive for a month after her head was slammed into a wall by Juvon D. Pickett, the 18-year-old boyfriend of Ashley's mother, Pecynthia Bradley. During her short life, the little girl had already been hospitalized twice after punishment at Pickett's hands. Her mother, too, stood by and watched while her daughter was being killed.

In Brooklyn last December, Luis Santiago was convicted of manslaughter for his role in the death of Justina Morales. The tot's mother, Denise Solero, testified that she held the child's hands steady while Santiago strangled the life out of her and helped to dispose of the body afterwards. "Mommy, make me pretty," were Justina's last words.



Open virtually any big-city newspaper and you will find a depressingly large number of such stories. A young child, living with his mother in a cramped apartment, is beaten to within an inch of his life—or, as in the cases cited above, meets death—at the hands of Mom's boyfriend/ex-husband/live-in, often while Mom looks on.

What is remarkable about such cases, however, is that they draw almost no systematic attention (much less condemnation) from anyone in a position of authority. In a country that obsesses over the effect of secondhand smoke on its children, that worries incessantly about "at-risk" youngsters, and whose chief executive is wont to use children's welfare as a justification for virtually any policy prescription of the moment, this is a significant oversight.

Systematic studies of the problem are indeed few and far between. "We don't have anything specifically on that," said a spokesman for the U.S. Department of Justice's Office of Justice Programs, though two of its divisions, the Bureau of Justice Statistics and the National Institute of Justice, do nothing but collect statistics on crime-related problems.

The few studies that have been done, however,

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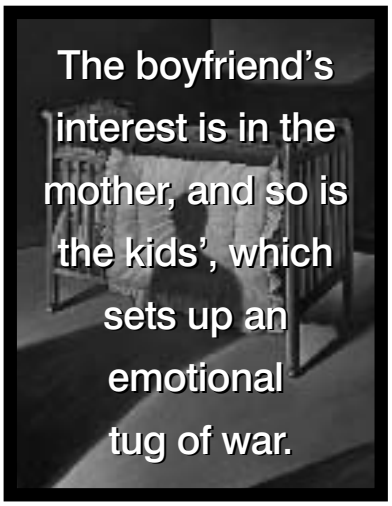
confirm what common sense already dictates: The statistical danger to a child is vastly increased by the presence of an unrelated man in the household.

A March 1996 study by the Bureau of Justice Statistics contains some interesting findings that indicate just how widespread the problem may be. In a nationally representative survey of state prisoners jailed for assaults against or murders of children, fully one-half of respondents reported the victim was a friend, acquaintance, or relative other than offspring. (All but 3 percent of those who committed violent crimes against children were men.) A close relationship between victim and victimizer is also suggested by the fact that three-quarters of all the crimes occurred in either the perpetrator's home or the victim's.

A 1994 paper published in the *Journal of Comparative Family Studies* looked at 32,000 documented cases of child abuse. Of the victims, only 28 percent lived with both biological parents (far fewer than the 68 percent of all children who live with both parents); 44 percent lived with their mother only (as do 25 percent of all children); and 18 percent lived with their mother and an unrelated adult (double the 9 percent of all children who live with their mother and an unrelated adult).



These findings mirror a 1993 British study by the Family Education Trust, which meticulously explored the relationship between family structure and child abuse. Using data on documented cases of abuse in Britain between 1982 and 1988, the report found a high correlation between child abuse and the marital status of the parents.

Specifically, the British study found that the incidence of abuse was an astounding 33 times higher in homes where the mother was cohabiting with an unrelated boyfriend than in stable nuclear families. Even when the boyfriend was the children's biological father, the chances of abuse were twice as high.

These findings are consonant with those published a year earlier by Leslie Margolin of the University of Iowa in the journal *Child Abuse and Neglect*. Prof. Margolin found that boyfriends were 27 times more likely than natural parents to abuse a child. The next-riskiest group, siblings, were only twice as likely as parents to abuse a child.

More recently, a report by Dr. Michael Stiffman presented at the latest meeting of the American Academy of Pediatrics, in October, studied the 175 Missouri children under the age of 5 who were murdered between 1992 and 1994. It found that the risk of a child's dying at the hands of an adult living in the child's own household was eight times higher if the adult was biologically unrelated.

The Heritage Foundation's Patrick Fagan discovered that the number of child-abuse cases appeared to rise in the 1980s along with the general societal acceptance of cohabitation before, or instead of, marriage. That runs counter to the radical-feminist view, which holds that marriage is an oppressive male institution of which violence is an integral feature. If that were true, then child abuse and domestic violence should have decreased along with the rise in cohabitation.

Heritage also found that in the case of very poor children (those in households earning less than $15,000 per year), 75 percent lived in a household where the biological father was absent. And 50 percent of adults with less than a high-school education lived in cohabitation arrangements. "This mix—poverty, lack of education, children, and cohabitation—is an incubator for violence," Fagan says.

Why, then, do we ignore the problem? Fagan has a theory: "It is extremely politically incorrect to suggest that living together might not be the best living arrangement."

"It is the great unmentionable," says David Blankenhorn, president of the New York-based Institute for American Values and the author of *Fatherless America*. "To bring up the boyfriend problem seems too much like you're passing judgment on the sexual behavior of single mothers."

Indeed, you will search in vain the Web sites of the major organizations supposedly dedicated to combating child abuse for any mention of the boyfriend problem. The National Clearinghouse on Child Abuse and Neglect, for example, lists the following as "primary" means of preventing child abuse: (1) "Public service announcements . . . encouraging parents to use non-violent forms of discipline." (2) "Parent education programs and groups teaching parents age-appropriate expectations." (3) "Public awareness campaigns informing citizens how and where to report suspected child abuse and neglect."

While acknowledging that abuse by boyfriends is

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a problem, Joy Byers, then-communications director of the National Committee to Prevent Child Abuse, became defensive when pressed as to why her organization doesn't highlight it. "Are you saying that single parents don't have the right to date or have adult friends in the house?" she asked.

In fact, culture-shaping vehicles such as movies and television shows as well as public-service announcements are more likely to imply or state that a child's father or stepfather (almost invariably portrayed as a respectable suburbanite) represents the greatest threat to the child. Remember Ted Danson's portrayal of such a father in the made-for-TV movie *Something About Amelia*? Or the husband in Farrah Fawcett's *The Burning Bed*?

It's easy to see why irresponsible sexual behavior militates against responsible parenthood. "The boyfriend's interest is in the child's mother," says a New York Police Department detective who specializes in domestic-violence cases and who asks not to be identified. "The kids' interest, of course, is also in their mother. So it sets up an almost automatic tug-of-war-type contest almost from the get-go. The boyfriend has no emotional or biological interest in the kids, so they are frequently seen as being 'in the way.'"

The boyfriend's uncertain status in the household makes the potential for explosion exceptionally high when he attempts to discipline the children.

"If mothers' boyfriends believe they lack legitimate authority in their partner's family, they may anticipate that other family members will not obey or respect them," says Prof. Margolin. "This leaves them defensive, looking for and reacting to affronts that are not there." As a consequence, boyfriends may be quicker to use violence against the children than natural fathers would be and may use it with less restraint when they do.

The boyfriend problem is partly a product, too, of the devaluation of fatherhood since the sexual revolution. While shelves of books have been written about the impact of the feminist movement on women, few have been written about its impact on men.

One effect, it seems, has been to encourage a sense that fathers are expendable. Parenting has come to be identified more than ever with "maternal" qualities—emotional nurturing, the easy expression of affection, and discomfort with discipline. Government seems to take a crudely materialistic view of fathers—slighting divorced fathers when it comes to enforcing visitation rights, for example, but noticing them as soon as they become "deadbeats."

Well, fathers are not simply sperm banks, or ATM machines, or pinch-hitters for when Mommy gets tired. It is their duty to keep their children safe from the harm others might inflict on them. Sadly, children's behavior is often not lovable, except by those with a primal interest in seeing their offspring grow and flourish. In other words, one of the main purposes of the nuclear family is to protect children from men who are not their fathers.

Child abuse is as old as the family itself, and it is true that in absolute numbers, far more children are abused by their parents than by anyone else. But the boyfriend problem is something new. It grows directly out of the looser social structure that has grown up in America since the 1960s. And since it is relatively recent, we have a fighting chance of being able to do something about it.

The social sanction given to cohabitation is of recent vintage. It can be reversed. But to build a consensus for restigmatizing cohabitation, and thus to start reversing the boyfriend problem, we need more information. Government agencies that are on the front lines, dealing with abused children daily, should begin systematically gathering information on family structure. This would be a fairly simple and cheap way of establishing empirically the dangers of what used to be called "living in sin."

Once this information is gathered, it will be possible to act on it. It wasn't long ago that a woman sharing living quarters with an unmarried man was considered prima facie an unfit mother. Social-service agencies can begin flagging kids living in such circumstances for special attention and, where necessary, even removing more children from such situations.

And how about a few public-service announcements simply to raise public awareness of the dangers of sharing living quarters with a man who refuses to make a commitment to marriage?

Meanwhile, there is at least one encouraging sign that the boyfriend problem is coming out of the closet. An off-Broadway play, "You Shouldn't Have Told," by Anne Thompson-Scretching, has been packing them in at various New York venues since January 1997. Thompson-Scretching herself is the product of a boyfriend-problem household, and she has written a raw and emotionally charged night of theater that explores the horrific consequences of a mother's allowing her no-good boyfriend to move in with her and her family.

"For a long, long time, this was a taboo subject, especially in the black community," the playwright says. Her willingness to admit the gravity of the problem sets a good example for the rest of us. ♦

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Return of the Wonks

. . . And Now, Back to Our Regularly Scheduled Policy Debates

By David Brooks

We're reaching the tail end of the contented nineties and there's not a compelling legislative debate on the horizon. The do-nothing Republican Congress is still beating the dead impeachment horse. And the White House types are still harking back to the glory days of the Family and Medical Leave Act. So last week, desperately seeking diversion, I went on a wonk safari, trekking through Washington seminar rooms in search of anything remotely resembling a provocative discussion.

It was a successful hunt. I found two events through which it was easy to stay awake. And, interestingly, both entailed thinkers invading enemy turf. The first was a conservative conference on America's cities—not a usual topic for often urbanophobic Republicans. And the second was a Democratic Leadership Council (DLC) confab that dealt largely with ways to semi-privatize the welfare state. Together, the two conferences were an occasion to measure the intellectual momentum of the rival parties.

The Livable Cities Conference was cosponsored by the Heritage Foundation, the Manhattan Institute, and the State Policy Network. It was a smart idea, because while there are not a lot of conservative voters in big cities—we were informed that only 18 percent of the big-city vote went Republican this year—there has been a succession of effective conservative reformers. This was a chance to gather them together—34 speakers in two days—and figure out what should come next.

Myron Magnet, editor of the Manhattan Institute's *City Journal*, gave an overview of the new approach to urban policy. It consists first of a complete rejection of the welfare-state model. Instead, there are four reform agendas: new approaches to police work (community policing); welfare reform (time limits and workfare); contracting out of services (creating competition in garbage collection and so on); and education reform (charter schools and school choice).

There were a bunch of mayors and other city officials at the conference who exemplify the approach. Indianapolis mayor Stephen Goldsmith, who spoke first, said the easy stuff has been accomplished. Police work has been reformed, city services have been privatized. The problems of the future, he continued, are not so amenable to government action. For example, Goldsmith pointed out, "We're doing a really good job of getting people off welfare. We're not doing a great job of getting people into work." In his city of a million, there are only 8,000 people left on the welfare rolls. They deserve to be there, he said. They have real problems. But another 40,000 who are off welfare are not looking for work. Each of them has an individual problem: One needs lessons in etiquette, another needs to be motivated to get out of bed in the morning, another needs transportation. And these problems are so particular they are beyond the reach of government. The only entities that can address them are small neighborhood groups, often faith-based, which can instill values and tailor assistance one person at a time.

There was an interesting rift at the conference between the conventional policy analysts, who think mostly in legislative terms, and the occasional person like Goldsmith or activist Robert Woodson who looks mostly to this neighborhood and faith-based approach, implying that today's problems are largely beyond politics and policy. Woodson, who works with neighborhood groups in 38 states and who must be among the most influential activists of the decade, gave an impassioned speech about all the success stories that get ignored. The real experts in solving urban problems don't come to conferences, he emphasized. That didn't seem to bother the conference-goers; on the contrary, it moved them. They gave Woodson sustained applause. But in the question period, the discussion reverted to policy talk, bypassing Woodson for a time.

Milwaukee mayor John Norquist, a Democrat, conceded that "on the left half of the spectrum, discussion of cities has become very shallow and brittle." He's gone out on a limb on behalf of school choice and as a result could go down in history. He

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grew most impassioned decrying the decision decades ago to have highways go straight into city centers. This did more to destroy cities than all the horrible social programs combined, he contended, because it wrecked neighborhoods and prompted middle-class people to flee. San Diego's Susan Golding delivered an inappropriate speech in full advertisements-for-myself mode. Wonks don't brag, and we feel our intelligence is being insulted when politicians brag at us.

But a number of the subsequent analysts rained on the impression that cities are enjoying a full-scale resurgence. Joel Kotkin, a fellow with the New Democrat Progressive Policy Institute, pointed out that any time cities compete head to head with suburbs for jobs, the suburbs win. As a result, he continued, cities should recognize they are never again going to be as dominant in American life as they were during the first half of the 20th century. They should acknowledge that, despite all the talk of Silicon Alley in New York, high-tech jobs go overwhelmingly to outlying areas. They should recognize that city populations are going to be restricted largely to two groups. The first is upscale childless people who like all the cultural amenities—gays, empty nesters, DINKs (double income, no kids), and scattered bohemians. Kotkin's old editor Joel Garreau calls them Brick-Sniffers. The second group is immigrants. The proper urban strategy therefore is to play to certain niches. Cities can still thrive with culture-based industries. They can still take advantage of their status as crossroads and specialize in trade. And they can take advantage of their entrepreneurial immigrant populations to develop small specialized manufacturing plants, as Los Angeles is doing.

All of this thinking was hardheaded and encouraging, but there was still a sense that market-based reforms remain on the defensive. The two big ideas that now loom over urban policies are regionalism and anti-sprawl legislation, and in both cases, it's liberal foundations that drive the debate. Consultants go around the country issuing reports on why each city should get together with its suburbs to create a regional government. All the local foundations jump on the bandwagon, as do the Chamber of Commerce goo-goos. But as Fred Siegel of Cooper Union argued, this is the updated version of the old welfare-state model—only instead of redistributing money from the federal government to the cities, you try to redistribute it directly from suburbs to cities. It allows cities to avoid the reforms they would need to undertake to become economically competitive. It causes cities to try to grab existing wealth rather than think of policies to generate new wealth. Indeed, the idea is based on the presumption that cities are victims of inexorable forces they couldn't reverse even if they tried.

The sprawl issue is being elevated these days by Al Gore. It's a legitimate issue. Many people, not just liberals, think something needs to be done about ugly suburban landscapes. But at this conference one got the sense that analysts on the right haven't figured out a positive way to address such concerns. Sam Staley of the Reason Foundation described the anti-sprawl movement and its various approaches. The city of Portland, Ore., draws a green line in the land and limits development outside it. The state of Maryland directs development into certain prescribed zones and devotes money to land preservation. Staley raised some objections to the plans for sprawl containment. They impinge on property rights. They don't address factors that push people out of cities in the first place. And they ignore the fact that even today there is a lot of open land in the United States. These struck me as exactly the sort of legitimate but modest objections conservatives always make just before they get flattened by an environmental initiative.

THE DLC TYPES SEE THE LAST ELECTION AS VINDICATING THEIR PARTY'S MOVE TO THE CENTER. THE SPEAKERS DID NOT STINT ON SELF-CONGRATULATION.

It used to be if you went to a Democratic party conference you'd hear plenty of talk about urban issues. But there was practically none of that at the DLC. Instead, it was middle-class and upper-middle-class issues that were on people's minds at this large gathering, attended by a convention-scale battalion of journalists. The mood was triumphant. The DLC types see the last election as vindication of their party's move to the center. The speakers did not stint on self-congratulation.

Nor did they wimp out. In fact, the DLC types seem legislatively emboldened by their success. The first real speech of the morning was by senator John Kerry of Massachusetts, a possible presidential contender, on the subject of education reform. It was a doozy. Kerry, who has been supported by the teacher unions in every race he has run, said the story of

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American education is "a story of failure." The school systems, he continued, are "imploding upon themselves."

This is not the sort of language the education establishment likes to hear. Kerry's solution is to turn every school into a charter school. This could be bold, depending on how Kerry defines charter school (some phony definitions allow only the appearance of change). But Kerry went further and tackled the truly tough education issues, tenure and teacher certification. He said we have to "end tenure as we know it" and make it easier to fire teachers. He called the certification process an "absurd anomaly" that creates a "convoluted monopolistic structure." He said it was ridiculous that smart people can go teach in private schools but not in public schools because they don't have the right certification. This was striking stuff coming from a Democrat.

Later in the morning senator Bob Kerrey of Nebraska was nearly as aggressive on the subject of Social Security reform. Kerrey, a war hero, declared that "live ammunition is used on those of us who propose real change to Social Security." He went on to attack Washington elitists who believe that American citizens aren't smart enough to manage their own retirement accounts. "Thank God General Eisenhower didn't have to face this crowd of doomsayers when he launched the Normandy invasion," Kerrey continued in full martial mode. His proposal wouldn't pass muster with some free marketeers, but it does give people more control over their retirement funds, and he is certainly belligerent on its behalf. At the end of these speeches I found myself thinking that with Democrats like these we don't really need Republicans.

But then along came Al Gore to remind me that the DLC hasn't exactly taken over the Democratic party. I confess to a bias here. Compared with some of my colleagues on the right, I don't get all that emotional about Bill Clinton. But Al Gore drives me up a wall. He doesn't have a genuine bone in his body. He is condescending. He is harshly partisan. He is self-righteous. He is never fair to those who disagree with him. He never steps outside himself to even become aware of his own shamelessness—which I believe Clinton is capable of doing.

Gore's speech to the DLC was awful. In the first place, it made no mention of any of the interesting policy ideas floated by other Democratic leaders earlier in the day. Instead, the vice president delivered a speech so lacking in policy content it gave pablum a bad name. "Today I challenge America to raise the banner of a new 'practical idealism' for the 21st century," Gore declared. And then, his flag of Practical Idealism flying, Gore had the chutzpah to mock Compassionate Conservatism for lacking substance!

But the essence of Gore-ism, setting the tone for his speech, is that no reasonable person could possibly disagree with him. Life never presents us with trade-offs, competing values that need to be balanced, Gore implies. Instead there is the conflict-free path to harmony and "win-win situations" which is the path preferred by enlightened Democrats like him. And then there is the tired old approach "that is plagued by false divisions, conflicts, and instabilities that should be relegated to the attic of the past," which is preferred by the rest of us savages.

"I CHALLENGE AMERICA TO RAISE THE BANNER OF A NEW 'PRACTICAL IDEALISM,'" SAID AL GORE. HIS SPEECH GAVE PABLUM A BAD NAME.

I emerged from my two days of conference-sitting happy, first of all, that the life of the mind—such as it ever is in Washington—has survived the year of Monica, Linda Tripp, and James Carville. Happy, too, that policy thinking still has momentum in sensible directions. I also left convinced there are some close races ahead of us. The DLC types seem to have over-interpreted their mandate in 1998, just as the GOP did in 1994. Today's voters may like centrism, but it is a cautious, status quo moderation, not the aggressive hyperkinetic centrism the DLC admires. Second, I concluded that Al Gore is not the only one in the Democratic party who seems to think the forces of history are inexorably on his side. As Newt Gingrich just got through demonstrating, that's a perilous thing to believe.

As for the conservatives, many of their ideas involving cities and social policy seem to lead to the door of faith-based charities. That may reflect a true insight into where solutions will ultimately be found. But politically, it's something of a dead end. Why should people vote for candidates who argue that solutions are beyond the reach of politics?

Still, the two conferences shared a lot of common ground, on charter schools, welfare-state semi-privatization, pro-immigration internationalism, free-trade globalism. If phrases like Practical Idealism and Compassionate Conservatism are ever fleshed out, presumably these are the policies that will make up their substance. ♦

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The Solution to Everything

The Case for a Family-Friendly Tax Cut

By Allan C. Carlson and David Blankenhorn

Almost everyone in Congress wants to "save" Social Security. *And* return some of the current budget surplus to the people in the form of tax cuts. *And* get rid of the much-discussed marriage penalty in which, perversely, some married couples pay more in federal taxes than the two of them together would have paid if they had remained single. *And*, let's not forget, improve child care *and* strengthen the American family. *And*, finally, get something (anything!) passed and signed into law in 1999 that would be substantive, bipartisan, and politically popular.

Fortunately, much of this good work can be accomplished in one lick, by mixing supply-side economic theory with a dose of pro-marriage sentiment, topped off with a profound insight from Gunnar Myrdal, the Swedish socialist and intellectual father of the modern welfare state. Call it The Solution to Everything. Or, more modestly, call it family-supportive tax reform.

Kevin Chadwick

Consider Social Security. In our pay-as-you-go system, the most important thing that working adults contribute is not money, but children. Current predictions of disastrous shortfalls in the Social Security trust fund after the year 2020, as the baby boomers become expensive retirees, assume that our currently low birth rate is an immutable social fact. Accordingly, most ideas to save the trust fund involve some combination of higher taxes, reduced benefits, and later ages of retirement. But all of the currently proposed solutions ignore the possibility and desirability of bringing more children—more twenty-first-century contributors to the trust fund—into the world now.

We estimate that each additional child born in the next ten years will contribute (using 1998 figures) an average of $242,000 to the trust fund during his or her working life. An additional 100,000 children born in any one year would contribute an additional $24.3 billion to the system. If U.S. marital fertility were to return to where it was in 1970—about 2.5 children per married couple, as opposed to 1.6 children per couple today—the additional births in just one year would eventually add $274 billion to the trust fund. You get the idea. Additional children born into responsible homes would go some distance toward solving the Social Security problem.

This was the great insight of Gunnar Myrdal. He realized that the modern welfare state's program of old-age retirement benefits, which he strongly supported, largely socialized the long-term economic benefits of having children, thereby sharply reducing the individual couple's economic incentive to have and raise children. But you can't run a benefits system forever based on a constantly shrinking pool of contributors. For this reason, Myrdal pushed hard for an explicitly pro-child family policy—a system of family-supportive tax measures and other benefits aimed at countering the anti-child incentives inadvertently created by many features of the modern welfare state.

Okay, so Myrdal was a socialist. But for conservatives, he could have easily and properly called his idea "supply-side" family policy. The essential notion is that we do have the power to grow our way out of a budget deficit, by doing something that is fun and that would also, by the way, produce enormous and multiple social benefits. Of course, demography does not determine culture. At the same time, for those

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who fret about our cultural condition, on issues ranging from vulgarity on television to "me-first" moral values, could any demographic shift imaginable bode better for us than more married couples having more children?

Can new economic incentives produce new children? Experience in Europe suggests that direct government grants, or "child allowances," have little long-term impact on fertility. However, the well-established U.S. alternative—tax benefits keyed to marriage and family size—does have a record of success in promoting more births. U.S. research by the demographer Leslie Whittington shows a strong, positive relationship between fertility and the real value of tax exemptions for children. Using her model, a team of researchers predicted that the 1986 tax reform, which increased the personal exemption for children, would raise fertility by 7.5 births per 1,000 women by 1990. The actual increase turned out to be 5.5. Other U.S. research shows that family-supportive tax benefits directly encourage more parental time spent in child-rearing, thus increasing what economists call human capital.

What accounts for these differences of result between U.S. and European family policies? To most economists, after all, there is little to distinguish a tax cut from a direct payment. But as regards family formation, there is apparently a big difference. (And here we conceptually part company from Gunnar Myrdal.) European-style child allowances are state benefits which, at least in the realm of symbol and psychology, tend to undercut family identity and interdependence, fostering instead a sense of dependence on the state. By contrast, family-supportive tax relief—letting families (as families, not as individuals) keep more of what they earn—pushes in exactly the opposite direction, toward greater family autonomy and cohesion. And therefore, it seems, toward greater size.

Accordingly, the first plank of the tax-reformist Solution to Everything should be to expand, either immediately or in stages, the current $500 child tax credit in the federal tax code to at least $1,000 per child. This worthy idea was proposed nearly a decade ago by the bipartisan National Commission on Children, chaired by Democratic senator Jay Rockefeller of West Virginia. The federal tax reform of 1997 created a new $400-per-child tax credit, which will rise to $500 in 1999. The logical next step would be to increase the value of this credit by $100 annually until it reaches $1,000 in 2004, after which it could be either increased further or indexed to inflation. In recommending the $1,000 credit in its 1991 report, *Beyond Rhetoric*, the commission noted that such an amount would be "neutral toward family structure and mother's employment" and so "would not discourage the formation of two-parent families or of single-earner families in which one parent chooses to stay at home and care for the children."

The second plank in a program of family-supportive tax relief is to universalize the current dependent-care tax credit, making it available on an equal basis to all families with young children. All parents need flexibility in combining their work responsibilities with the care of their children, particularly during the pre-school years. In particular, surveys consistently show that most working mothers wish they could spend more time at home with their young children. At the same time, millions of couples struggle to keep one parent at home with children, either by sacrificing one potential income or by working different shifts.

FEDERAL TAX POLICY DOES NOTHING TO HELP FAMILIES THAT STRUGGLE TO KEEP A PARENT AT HOME. INSTEAD, BENEFITS FLOW TO AFFLUENT COUPLES.

Yet current federal tax policy does nothing to help these families. Instead, it taxes them at historically high rates and then, through the dependent-care tax credit, subsidizes the one form of child care that contains the least flexibility and is the least popular among parents: commercial day care. As a result, benefits flow exclusively to a minority of relatively affluent, two-earner couples.

A fairer approach is to extend the credit to all families with children under age 6. As a result, there would be no losers. For those currently receiving the credit, their child-care choices would increase dramatically; no longer, for example, would they lose the benefit by electing to spend additional time at home with children. Moreover, families currently struggling to care for their own children at home would no longer be punished by the tax code.

The third and final component of family-supportive tax reform is to reinstate the policy of income-splitting, which would recognize married couples as equal partners at tax time, permitting them fully to share their income for purposes of taxation. Income-splitting was the law of the land between 1948 and 1963, the only period in the twentieth century when U.S. marriage rates were increasing and divorce rates

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dropping. Income-splitting is the only fair way to eliminate the tax code's current marriage penalty, against which Congress struggled unsuccessfully during the last session.

Representative David McIntosh recently crafted a revised bill that captures the essence of income-splitting: McIntosh proposes that married couples enjoy both a standard deduction and a base tax bracket that are twice as wide as those for unmarried taxpayers. While this worthy measure fell victim to the great congressional policy implosion of 1998, it stands as a solid guide for tax reform in 1999. One useful change, we believe, would be to double the size of all tax brackets for married couples, not just the base bracket of 15 percent.

These three principles of family-supportive tax reform—boosting the child tax credit, universalizing the dependent-care credit, and reinstating income-splitting—are all guided by a certain way of thinking about the tax code's purposes. They are currently overshadowed in the public debate by two other notions: tax-code neutrality and non-targeted, general tax relief. Yet the idea of tax-code neutrality toward marriage—frequently invoked by those who favor taxing each person as an individual, regardless of marital status—is an unattainable fantasy. To ignore marriage in the tax code is to pretend that marriage does not exist. Pretending that marriage does not exist inevitably harms marriage as a social institution, especially when it is the government of a modern welfare state that is doing the pretending.

Nor is it enough simply to cut taxes across the board, another solution much favored by those who want to ignore the fact that incentives regarding marriage are unavoidably embedded in any tax code. Short of the abolition of taxes, there simply is no way to duck the core question: Do we want public policy to recognize marriage and child-rearing, or don't we? To us, this is a no-brainer. It's even easier than the question of whether we want a tax cut. Across-the-board tax cuts will make us financially better off. Family-supportive tax reform will also make us financially better off. *And* it will offer assistance in other areas, such as Social Security. *And*, most important, it will help us as we struggle to strengthen our families and spend more time with our children. ♦

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The Zsa-Zsa-ing of the American Mind?

Life as a B-Grade Movie

By Donald Lyons

The notion that new means of expression—the printing press, the novel, the cinema, radio, television, the Internet—have in themselves the power to derange human behavior and undo morals is an old one.

And besides being old, it seems to have a fatal attraction for finger-wagging, hand-wringing pontificators in Sunday newspaper supplements. Indeed, Neal Gabler's widely noticed new study, *Life the Movie: How Entertainment Conquered Reality*, originated in the Sunday *New York Times*.

Plato began it all, as he did so much else. In the *Phaedrus*, Socrates proclaims the inferiority of writing (not then a widespread accomplishment). Calling "written speech" a "shadow of living and animate speech," Socrates declares,

> You might suppose that [written words] understand what they are saying, but if you ask them what they mean by anything they simply return the same answer over and over again. Besides, once a thing is committed to writing, it circulates equally among those who understand the subject and those who have no business with it; a writing cannot distinguish between suitable and unsuitable readers.

His interlocutor Phaedrus replies—as Socrates' interlocutors are wont to do—"All that you say is absolutely just." We, however, need not be so compliant.

We might reflect, for example, that this condemnation of writing occurs at the end of what is a piece of highly wrought writing. In writing of great beauty, Plato condemns writing for its unchanging and indiscriminately appealing nature and its distance from the reality of speech. Plato the artist wars with Plato the moral absolutist.

But that may be something of the point that Plato teaches us, for it is in such ambivalences that Plato's wisdom lies. As Matthew Arnold once put it:

> Practical people talk with a smile of Plato and his absolute ideas; and it is impossible to deny that Plato's ideas do often seem impractical and unpracticable, and especially when one views them in connection with the life

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of a great work-a-day world like the United States.

It is precisely Plato's impractical idealism, argues Arnold, that makes him indispensable for the busy modern free man. And that's exactly how Plato can help vaccinate us against modern alarmists like Neal Gabler.

If, with work or a good deed pressing to be done, we're tempted to slip a movie into the VCR or surf the Net or watch the game, we can take comfort in knowing that Plato would think us heirs of those Athenians who chose to while away an idle hour reading Homer. It's not the new media, not their sophisticated removal from "reality," that are the danger; it's human sloth and lust and pride. And those things never change.

But even threadbare clichés like the "human-nature-altering potential of new media" deserve better than *Life the Movie*. An entertainment historian who has written about Hollywood moguls and about gossip-monger Walter Winchell, Neal Gabler thinks he sees a new and ominous pattern in the scandals that have preoccupied the media in recent years.

As we all watch in stupefaction, celebrities are acting out "lifies"—a neologism by which Gabler means movies "written in the medium of life, projected on the screen of life." The filmmakers are such people as O.J. Simpson, Princess Diana, Oprah Winfrey, Elizabeth Taylor, and Timothy McVeigh, and the events they orchestrate act "like a cultural Ebola virus," corrupting realms of serious discourse. They replace, in form and in content, older entertainment media like films and TV dramas.

These "lifies" are also, in some sense, ersatz reality—although Gabler never makes clear whether they are ersatz in themselves or ersatz in that they replace quotidian life for their consumers. The whole idea, in fact, proves blurry in concept and banal in expression.

But it hardly matters, for there are long stretches in which *Life the Movie* forgets its strained conceit and merely reiterates with gasps of astonishment Gabler's discovery that mass media are preoccupied with celebrity. The author is shocked, shocked to find that *People* magazine puts celebrities on its covers: fifty-five covers with Diana, twenty-six of Liz, etc. To his surprise, *Vanity Fair* too is "all about celebrity, . . . only about celebrity" with no space for "Good Samaritans, outstanding teachers or doctors, individuals in extremis"!

Neal Gabler
Life the Movie
How Entertainment Conquered Reality
Knopf, 320 pp., $25

Curiously, there is very little mention of the far more grievous celebrification of the *New Yorker* by the same Tina Brown who had turned *Vanity Fair* into a celebrity machine—both times with the eager collaboration of New York's liberal intelligentsia. Gabler does find time to chide Camille Paglia for her antics, but none to examine her ideas.

There's little original research in *Life the Movie*. It's a cut-and-paste job whose bibliography is full of earlier treatments like Leo Braudy's *The Frenzy of Renown* and Richard Schickel's *Intimate Strangers*. (Even the *People* magazine stuff comes not from *People* but from a book *about* the magazine.) And that's not to mention celebrity bios and autobios like *Zsa Zsa Gabor: My Story*.

The all-but-forgotten Gabor emerges, rather oddly, as a significant figure whose "achievement was much more complex" than that of prior celebrities known for being known. (There are times when this book reads like a worried essay written for the *Saturday Review of Literature* in the 1950s by someone like Marya Mannes or Harriet Van Horne.) Ignoring her substantial screen accomplishments, Gabler treats Liz Taylor merely as someone who has taken the life-as-movie paradigm farther than anyone else.

In a rare moment of insight, Gabler treats Madonna as a postmodern celebrity—that is, someone who delights in exposing the mechanics of her image-changes. But at best, these ruminations amount to a C+ paper in Cultural Studies.

When, for example, he attempts to judge or evaluate by citing high culture, Gabler stumbles badly. He contrasts Andy Warhol, the artist as pure entertainer, to his predecessors: "For Warhol art wasn't a celebration of God's handiwork, as it was for so many of the nineteenth-century painters, and it wasn't an expression of the artist's sensibility, as it was for most twentieth-century painters." Can we trust anything from a writer who could so describe either the century of Turner and Cézanne or the century of Matisse and Picasso?

And besides, all this wailing underestimates the moral health of most people, who do not in fact worship Princess Diana or hang pictures by Andy Warhol. After initial fascination, most of us incorporate technology into our lives and forget scandals, however transmitted.

It is when Gabler handles figures of genuine moral authority that he reveals most clearly his own complicity with the trends he deplores. In an offensive passage, he compares Pope John Paul II in pain and prayer at Czestochowa in 1991 to "soul singer James Brown's act, where Brown stumbles and collapses only to be helped to his feet by his acolytes and draped with a protective cape, a man stricken by the burdens of rock and roll." Gabler

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devotes ten pages to regurgitating the thesis of Lou Cannon's book *President Reagan: The Role of a Lifetime*—that Reagan shaped his tenure of office as a movie, an entertainment proffering feel-good escapism and distraction from "issues." Bush's Gulf War was subsequently constructed like "a World War II picture from Reagan's Hollywood heyday."

Nothing is too snide for Gabler to repeat if it concerns a Republican president. But Clinton? Ah, he's a victim of the media's addiction to "entertainment value" in their unjustified airing of his "alleged affair" and "alleged behavior" with Monica Lewinsky. Clinton's high-minded handlers, according to Gabler, lack the manipulative savvy of the Republicans. Gabler may have been wrongfooted on Lewinsky because his book went to press before Clinton confessed, but the kid-glove treatment of Clinton well into his second term bespeaks a naiveté at best and a tendentious and hypocritical partisanship at worst.

Gabler concludes *Life the Movie* with a mind-boggling switcheroo. After denouncing the perversion of life into entertainment, Gabler suddenly waffles on the last pages. Fearful, perhaps, of seeming traditionally judgmental or intolerant of anything whatsoever—wanting, perhaps, to be loved—the author concludes by confessing he can't decide whether it's all a Good Thing or a Bad Thing.

"Either we stood on a precipice or we stood in a bright new dawn" (these limp tropes are not, by the way, the rhetorical antitheses Gabler evidently thinks they are). We can only be certain, he insists, that "vitally important issues with the most profound implications" are involved. Yeah, yeah. This is at once the dopiest and the dullest book of the year. ♦

Lord of the Ring

David Remnick's Muhammad Ali

By Brian Murray

It's October 30, 1974 and the fight between George Foreman and Muhammad Ali is about to start. Set in Kinshasa, Zaire, the bout has been hyped for months, dubbed "The Rumble in the Jungle" by its promoter, Don King. Foreman is the reigning heavyweight champion and heavy favorite; he's a massive, mean, undefeated slugger who has knocked out thirty-seven opponents in forty fights.

But for months Ali has been publicly mocking Foreman, questioning his intelligence, his durability, his might, dismissing him as an "amateur" and a "mummy" who gained his title by beating "bums." "This fight," Ali promises, "will be the greatest upset of which anyone has ever heard."

Now, at fight-time, Foreman tries a psychological ploy of his own. Ali's already in his corner, but for several long minutes Foreman refuses to appear. It's an old boxing trick: The champ dawdles in his dressing room so that his challenger, alone in the ring, can consider more fully the hard flogging he's about to receive.

But Foreman's plan backfires. Ali shows nothing but confidence and calm. As he waits, he shadowboxes; he prays; he welcomes—and leads—the crowd's cheers. And by the time Foreman finally pushes through the

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Random House

Muhammad Ali screams at the fallen Sonny Liston, May 25, 1965.

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ropes, it's clear that few in the packed stadium are on his side. They're all lustily backing the handsome and amusing underdog—a man who has long billed himself as "The World's Most Colorful Fighter."

Of course, Foreman-Ali proved to be one of the most celebrated bouts in modern boxing history—the subject of Norman Mailer's *The Fight*, first published in 1975, and Leon Gast's fine 1996 film documentary, *When We Were Kings*. At its start the two fighters slugged it out, toe-to-toe. But by its close Ali was in complete control. He'd spent much of the match leaning far back against the ropes, taunting Foreman, absorbing a constant shelling of blows. "George," he kept saying, "that all you got?" as Foreman, the knock-out king, hauled back and hammered away. At the end Foreman was dizzy, shot, wide open to Ali's precise jabs and the speedy combination of hard punches that left him senseless on the mat.

A triumphant Muhammad Ali returns home to Louisville in 1963.

Later Ali disclosed that he had flummoxed Foreman with a "Rope-a-Dope" strategy that, he knew, would lure Foreman into wasting his energy in the early rounds. In 1994, at forty-five, Foreman would regain his title with a knock-out of Michael Moorer. But his loss to Ali left him embarrassed and depressed, and in 1977 he left boxing for ten years, uncertain of the skills that had made him the sport's most intimidating figure.

Throughout the 1970s, Ali also "retired," several times. He was bigger, perhaps even stronger, than ever before. He was still bombastic, ever willing to ham it up before cameras and microphones. But as his fight with Foreman showed, Ali—though still faster than most heavyweights—was slowing down. He continued to notch some impressive victories. But, like Foreman, he now found himself struggling against fighters he would have outfoxed and outboxed just a few years before. In 1981, against Larry Holmes's left jab—probably the best in heavyweight history—Ali mustered no defense. He looked dazed, slow and pathetically vulnerable. Another lopsided loss to the overrated Trevor Berbick proved conclusively that, by 1981, the Ali of old was irretrievably gone.

David Remnick
King of the World
Muhammad Ali and the Rise of an American Hero
Random House, 326 pp., $25

How good was he? In his new book *King of the World*, David Remnick (the recently appointed editor of the *New Yorker*) notes that Ali "built his boxing style on the principle that a big man could borrow the tactics of a smaller man"—a man like Sugar Ray Robinson, a middleweight and one of Ali's boyhood heroes. Some boxing analysts have argued that this approach—while aesthetically intriguing—was all wrong for a man of Ali's size, forcing him to rely too often and for too long on footwork and speed. Thus, unlike the durable Jack Jackson—another of his heroes—Ali failed to develop the defensive skills that are part of the repertoire of a truly masterful boxer.

Still, Ali improved steadily as a puncher; he proved too, in his epic battles against Foreman, Ken Norton, and Joe Frazier, that he could stand up to the hardest hitters in the game. He was graceful, resilient, and shrewd. In an era unusually rich in heavyweight talent, Ali never dodged a foe. Foreman, Frazier, Norton, Jerry Quarry, Earnie Shavers, Leon Spinks: Ali beat them all. He was a three-time heavyweight champion who defended his title nineteen times—fewer than Joe Louis and Holmes, but far more than other heavyweights in this century. (Jack Dempsey made only five title defenses; Rocky Marciano, six.)

Ali first gained wide notice when, fighting as Cassius Clay, he won a gold medal at the 1960 Olympics. He turned pro the same year, and fought

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Random House

frequently, almost monthly, building a long list of decisive wins. But until he met Sonny Liston in Miami in 1964, Ali hadn't been truly tested. Except for the British champion Henry Cooper and the aging Archie Moore, most of Ali's early opponents had been journeyman stiffs, steps up the ladder to a championship fight.

Liston was imposingly different—a sullen, enigmatic man whose tough-guy front masked a range of wounds and insecurities. An ex-con with an excellent punch and a menacing glare, Liston was, in effect, a taller Mike Tyson. His method was first to scare the wits out of his challengers and then flatten them. Just before fighting Ali, Liston had twice defended his title by twice bludgeoning Floyd Patterson to the canvas in the opening round. "Ever since the first Patterson fight," writes Remnick, Liston "had allowed himself to believe that he could climb in the ring and take off his robe, and the other man would drop for the ten-count."

Ali's early career and his two stunning defeats of Liston form the core of *King of the World*. As Remnick demonstrates, the young Cassius Clay was from the start an unusually disciplined athlete who decided to become a boxing champion while still a schoolboy in Louisville. Unlike Liston, Foreman, Tyson, and countless others, Clay didn't fit the mold of the troubled prizefighter whose decision to lace up the gloves saved him from years in the penitentiary. As an adolescent Ali was funny, shy, polite and—like the current W.B.C. titleholder, Lennox Lewis—the product of a fairly stable lower-middle-class household. Ali read the Bible, kept out of trouble, and was so conscious of his nutrition that, as Remnick relates, he not only swore off soda pop, but "carried around a bottle of water with garlic in it—a solution he said, that would keep his blood pressure down and his health perfect." As a promising amateur, Cassius Clay won state and national Golden Gloves championships and enjoyed wide support in the Louisville community.

In many respects Ali was still very much a kid when, at twenty-two, he battled Liston for the first time. The fight had provoked wide publicity, for Ali had recently converted to Islam and aligned himself with the Black Muslim movement and its message of racial separation. More, he had begun to mug outrageously for the press rather in the manner of such pro-wrestling stars as the flamboyant Gorgeous George, a "Liberace in tights," as Remnick observes—and, revealingly, another of Clay's early heroes.

But there was method in Ali's technique. As Ferdie Pacheco, his long-time physician, points out, "Ali became impossible for his opponents to gauge." In 1977, Earnie Shavers had Ali hurt and reeling against the ropes, but, Pacheco recalls, "held back because he thought Ali was kidding. People always thought he was crazy."

Predicting victory before the fight began, Ali turned his bout with Liston into a weird remake of Federico Fellini's 1954 film, *La Strada*. Under Ali's direction, Liston found himself playing Anthony Quinn's part, the gruff, aloof, seemingly invincible Strongman. Ali, meanwhile, assumed Richard Basehart's role. He was the Fool, disrupting press events with his cartoonish antics and loud mockeries of Liston's prison record and scant education. Long scorned in the press, Liston, writes Remnick, "resented being thought of as mobster's meat, a killer in trunks, boots, and gloves." Liston "demanded respect, the solemnity due a king." Ali utterly denied him this, calling him "chump" instead of "champ."

As he later would with Foreman, Ali cleverly made Liston wear himself out. Ali bobbed and weaved incessantly, easily slipping Liston's best shots. By the seventh round, Liston—humbled and worn—ended the fight by quitting on his stool. Ali, the new heavyweight champion, leapt exuberantly around the ring, jeering the many pressmen at ringside who had forecast Liston's quick and easy win. "Eat your words," Ali shouted. "I am the king! King of the world!"

A year later, Ali beat Liston again, even more breezily, knocking him to the canvas within minutes of the opening bell. Now, it was Ali who looked unbeatable. Between 1965 and 1967—when he was banned from boxing for refusing the draft—Ali defeated all challengers, including Floyd Patterson, the former two-time champ who had publicly questioned the wisdom of Ali's religious conversion, and who—in a letter to *Sports Illustrated*—insisted that "the image of a Black Muslim as the world heavyweight champion disgraces the sport and the nation."

Ali's continuing popularity owes much to his humor and generosity—to the easy, patient way he mixed with the public and his friends. But against Patterson, Ali displayed his darker side—what Remnick calls the "flashes of dismissive cruelty" that

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flared, not infrequently, in the early stages of his career. The smaller, lighter Patterson—long dogged by self-doubts—was outclassed from the start. But Ali mocked and beat him mercilessly for twelve rounds until the bout was stopped and Patterson, battered and barely conscious, was carted by his seconds from the ring. For his part, Ali, writes Remnick, found "his right was so sore" from pounding Patterson that "he accepted congratulations only with his left."

Remnick's account of Ali's early career is fairly complete but—for serious boxing fans, at least—not new. Remnick underplays the crucial role of the fighter's long-time trainer, Angelo Dundee, whose record of ring success is nearly as impressive as Ali's own. Dundee—who also worked with such champions as Carmen Basilio and Willie Pastrano—succeeded mostly by letting Ali be Ali. He didn't try to transform the fighter's unorthodox style, but he refined it in countless ways, building the foundation for Ali's continuing success.

Remnick is a skilled and lively writer; his previous books—especially *Lenin's Tomb*, published in 1994—show a marked talent for dialogue, narration, and characterization. Certainly, with *King of the World*, Remnick has chosen his subject well. Arrogant and humble, gracious and rude, Ali remains an unfailingly fascinating character; he's "intricate," as Dundee once put it, as both a fighter and a man.

Remnick reveals Ali's distinguishing traits—his drive, his moodiness, his narcissism—as well as the factors that helped shape his character and public persona. Remnick's portraits of many of the supporting figures in the Ali drama are no less intriguing. Liston, certainly, hasn't been so fully portrayed since A.S. Young's oddly affecting *Sonny Liston: The Champ Nobody Wanted*, published in 1963.

Liston, as Remnick reveals, came to a particularly bleak end. Like his old friend Joe Louis, Liston washed up in Las Vegas, where he mingled with mobsters, and—like Louis—turned increasingly to drugs. Liston died broke and under suspicious circumstances in 1970—not long after embarking on yet another hopeless trek up the comeback trail. The more honorable and articulate Patterson took up various civic activities; in 1995, he was named New York's athletic commissioner. More recently, however, Patterson has shown signs of the sort of mental decline that now marks the lives of other veteran fighters, including Jerry Quarry and Wilfred Benitez. In one recent public appearance, Patterson revealed that he couldn't quite remember who he'd beaten to win his first heavyweight title. Sometimes, he admitted, he had trouble remembering names—including his wife's.

Ali's neurological and fight-related deterioration is far better known. For more than a decade Ali's movements have grown increasingly labored; his words are slurred sometimes; his speech is slow. The late sports columnist Jim Murray once noted that rough and ruthless men like Jack Dempsey and Jake LaMotta were virtually born to be fighters; they "couldn't be anything but." Ali, Murray noted, "even though he may have been the best of all time, was miscast as a fighter. He paid the price." Ali, Murray suggested, "was right, he was too pretty to fight," and could well have excelled as "a point guard," or—as Vince Lombardi also suggested—"a tight end."

But Ali had no interest in other sports; football, he told the sportswriter Robert Lipsyte, "was tooooo rough. You got to get hit in that game." It is perhaps true, as Murray has suggested, that Ali's career "was caked in tragedy." But, as Ali himself told Remnick, he has no regrets about his chosen profession. "A lesser man," Remnick writes, "could be forgiven some hours of darkness, for here is a performer who was robbed of what seemed to be his essence—his physical beauty, his speed, his wit, his voice—and yet Ali never betrays self-pity." "I know why this happened," Ali told Remnick. "God's showing me that I'm just a man like everyone else. Showing you, too." ♦

Bech to the Future

John Updike's Alter-Ego, Again

By Margaret Boerner

Word after word, line after line, paragraph after paragraph, John Updike writes a seductively perfect prose. He seems as well never to have suffered writer's block. We have over fifty books from the man, delivered over forty years: a cornucopia of stories, novels, novellas, poems, essays, and book reviews. Updike must be the only American writer ever to combine such grace with such output, and he is easily the best American writer now alive.

Born in 1932, Updike sold his first story to the *New Yorker* in 1954, the same year he finished college at Harvard. Though he intended to be a cartoonist (and attended the Ruskin School at Oxford), he returned to the United States and became instead a staff writer for the *New Yorker*. But after two years he retired to New England—where he has been writing, largely about the suburbs and small-town America, ever since.

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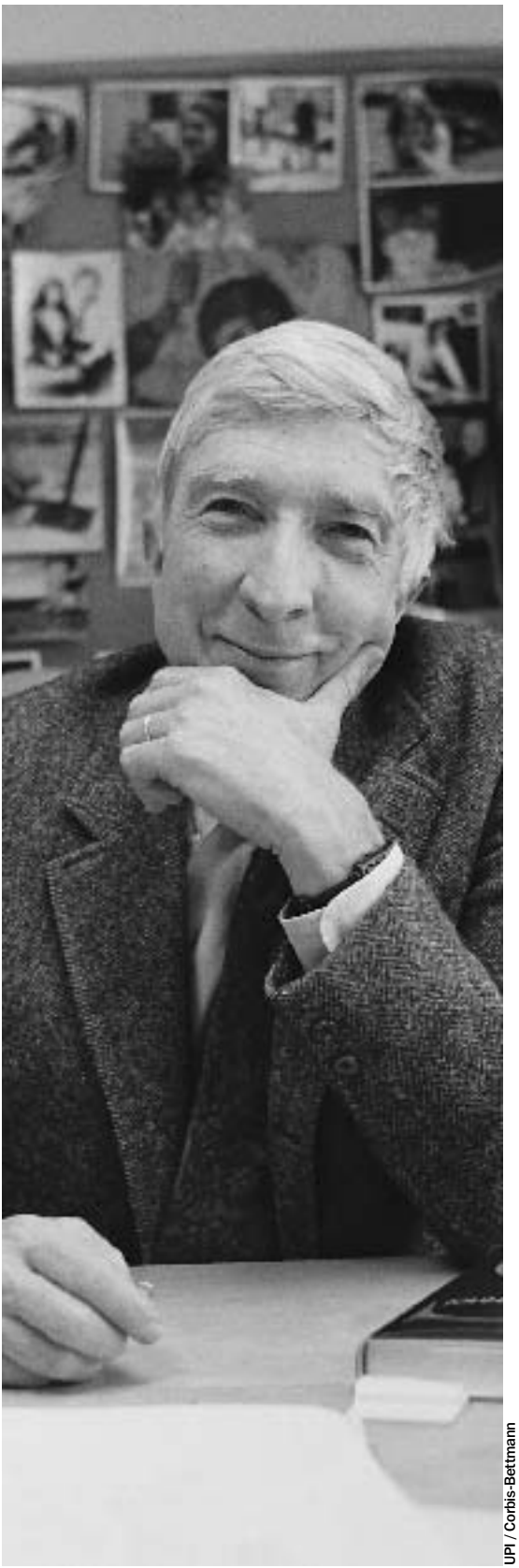

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The brilliant *Rabbit, Run* (1961) was published when he was only twenty-nine and marked him as a major American writer. Indeed, in his forties, Updike was told by some critics that he was a sure bet to win the Nobel Prize because he had created a character, "which no one does these days." The character is Harry "Rabbit" Angstrom, a small-town, lower-middle-class Pennsylvanian, who selfishly but gloriously believes "there's something out there that wants me to find it." Updike followed Rabbit through three more novels, written at ten-year intervals as the character grew older but hardly wiser: *Rabbit Redux* (1971), *Rabbit Is Rich* (1981), and *Rabbit at Rest* (1990)—the last two both receiving the Pulitzer Prize.

Updike often revisits his characters. Over the years, for example, he traced the marital infidelities of the middle-class Richard and Joan Maples through a series of stories collected in the 1979 *Too Far to Go*. A frequent concern of Updike's is infidelity resulting from a deep yearning not to close off possibility; it was the theme of the bestselling *Couples* in 1968 and *The Witches of Eastwick* in 1984.

But Henry Bech—a character that with his latest collection, *Bech at Bay*, Updike has now visited for the third time—is unmarried and faces more problems with creativity than fidelity. Henry Bech was first seen in a 1966 story, "The Bulgarian Poetess." A much-anthologized account of an American writer's literary passion behind the Iron Curtain, it was written after Updike had received the National Book Award for *The Centaur*, been elected a member of the National Institute of Arts and Letters, and lectured in an American-Soviet cultural exchange program.

Updike collected his first batch of stories about his writing alter-ego in 1970 with *Bech*, and returned to his character in 1982, winning his second *Time* magazine cover with *Bech Is Back*. Updike has insisted that Bech is a writer as "different" from himself as he "could make him and still connect with him." Thus, where Updike is a suburban, married father, Bech is an urban bachelor, ten years older than his creator. Where Updike is prolific, Bech is blocked. Where Updike is an all-American Protestant, Bech is an all-American Jew.

Not everyone finds the difference convincing. The novelist Cynthia Ozick once complained that Bech's Jewishness consists of being called Jewish by Updike, with a few Yiddish words thrown in. But, in fact, Updike's intent is not to convey the Jewish immigrant and religious experience. What he seems to be looking for in his secular, assimilated Jewish-American writer is a character with which to express the way in which many Americans feel themselves to be *something*-Americans: slightly hyphenated people who stand both entirely inside the culture and just a little bit outside—which is not a bad definition of the job of a novelist. "More fervently than he was a Jew," we discover, "Bech was a writer, a literary man." Updike's Jewish novelist is the manifestation of a writer's sense of being inside/outside the social world he observes.

If, however, Bech really is as unlike Updike as Updike can still "connect with," then he can't connect a very long way. Updike's politics, like his character's, are unclear but certainly not radical (a liberal critic once sniffed that the only federal program Updike seems to support is the U.S. Mail). Bech is a middle-class writer from a poorish background. So is Updike. Bech is a middle-aged, cultivated white American male with an exquisite ear and eye for the way other people speak and behave. So is Updike. The difference is not that great.

But that is exactly what gives Updike the simultaneous closeness and distance to use the Bech stories, as he says, "to write about being a

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writer." It lets him express his most ironical thoughts about critics, writing, and himself. A dying critic's last, gasping words to Bech are: "Your stuff . . . won't last. It's . . . upper-middlebrow . . . trash. Not even upper. Middle-middle . . . Fifties! . . . You're Fifties!"

Bech/Updike scans the critics, the prize givers, the publicity agents, the Soviet-bloc exchange writers, the television interviewers ("Charlie [Rose] was wonderful. . . . I hardly said a word"), the students, the lawyers, the readers, and "all these Brits who were breeding like woodlice in the rotting log piles of the New York literary industry."

In Updike's account, Henry Bech was born in 1923 in the New York City he's never really left, moving from his childhood "9th Street brownstone" in Brooklyn to a "shabby large apartment" at 97th and Riverside Drive, and to a loft in Little Italy when he comes into money. Updike has recently joked (on *The Charlie Rose Show*, of course) that when he moved from New York to Ipswich, he "left Bech" in New York "to watch over things."

In *Bech*, we learn that Bech wrote a well-received first novel, *Travel Light*, and a novella, *Brother Pig*, in the 1950s. Then, in 1963, he published his would-be masterpiece, a long novel called *The Chosen*, to reviews so bad that fifteen years of writer's block resulted. The block was broken in the second book, *Bech is Back*, only by his new wife in the suburbs ordering him to finish something because "We need the dough." But that marriage broke up soon after *Think Big* finally saw the light of day, and Bech moved back to the city to which his heart belonged. The suburbs, with all its grass, bees, and WASPs, had always made him uneasy.

Think Big was a popular success, largely because of its sex scenes, and Updike indulges himself in composing critical notices for his fictional character's fiction:

> "The squalid book we all deserve," said Alfred Kazin in the *New York Times Book Review*.
>
> "A beguilingly festive disaster," decreed John Leonard in the daily *Times*.
>
> "Not quite as *vieux chapeau* as I had every reason to fear," allowed Gore Vidal in the *New York Review of Books*.

Bech is splashed across the cover of *Vogue* "modeling a corduroy coat and a ribbed wool turtleneck," as Updike was on the cover of *Time*.

The latest Bech volume, *Bech at Bay*, has the subtitle "A Quasi-Novel," because—as Updike explains—he decided to complete another Bech book after writing the first story in the collection, a forty-pager about

John Updike
Bech at Bay
A Quasi-Novel
Knopf, 272 pp., $23

Bech in Prague for the *New Yorker*. But the structure of this new volume turns out to be not all that different from the structure of the first two—except perhaps that the linked stories in *Bech at Bay* culminate in a threefold climax as, in his seventies, Bech becomes a murderer, a father, and a Nobel Prize winner.

Bech turns to murder in "Bech Noir," the penultimate story in the book, just before "Bech and the Bounty of Sweden" confers the Nobel Prize upon him to the groans of the critics, only John Simon rising to his defense with a piece entitled "The Case (Far-Fetched) for Henry Bech." Bech explains that he

> had not always been an evil man. He had dedicated himself early to what appeared plainly a good cause, art. . . . What harms could there be in art? What enemies could there be? . . . But he discovered the literary world was a battlefield—mined with hatred, rimmed with snipers. . . . As he aged into the ranks of the elderly, adverse phrases from the far past surfaced in his memory, word for word—"says utterly nothing with surprising aplomb," "too toothless or shrewd to tackle life's raw meat," . . . "minor, minorer, minormost." . . . After fifty years of trying to rise above criticism, he liberated himself to take it personally.

And, of course, these snippets of criticism that drift through Bech's murderous consciousness are a grab bag of phrases fashioned by critics to castigate Updike himself.

Bech kills the first critic impulsively, the next two at carefully planned long distance, and the last face to face. He is eventually helped at murder by his admiring, computer-literate amanuensis, who (like Barbara Stanwyck in *Double Indemnity*) is turned on by his daring—so turned on, in fact, that she later blackmails him into fatherhood. The idea of "Bech Noir," Updike has explained, was prompted by the Library of America's recent publication of a two-volume collection of American mystery fiction. But it surely owes something as well to *Theatre of Blood*, the campy 1973 horror movie in which Vincent Price, a sawdust thespian, exacts a baroque revenge on six theater reviewers.

In all five stories in *Bech at Bay*, we experience one of the pleasures of reading anything by Updike: his ability to grasp any material that swims into his view. There's computer hacking (in "Bech Noir"), the law of libel (in "Bech Pleads Guilty," Bech is sued for mocking a Hollywood agent), ethnic food (in Los Angeles, "nimble Japanese in chef hats slice steak and vegetables into a kind of edible origami"), and the ambivalence of Eastern Europeans toward the history of their Jews (in "Bech in Czech").

These stories are mostly playful. The fictional Bech writes the forward for the real Updike, saying "I don't suppose your publishing this little *jeu* [Updike's pun on *Jew*?] of a book will do either of us drastic harm." But the stories do not lack the virtues of the author's more serious work. In particular, they exhibit his intense melding

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of the keenly observed stuff of the concrete world with its symbolic potential. Michael Novak has analyzed this as Updike's "Platonic inner world," in which "myth and symbol are his necessary tools." In this latest collection, a tall Swedish woman is, "in her splendor, frightening," and Bech notices that

> the world seemed to hold . . . more and more women over six feet in height—whole clusters of them—as if Nature, no longer designing women close to the ground for purposes of childbearing and domestic labor, were launching them toward some function as yet unknown.

In interviews, Updike has said he gave Bech the Nobel Prize partly to "end the speculation" that he himself might receive it. "The Nobel committee," he says, "is not in search of aging, white Western men these days." This is probably correct. But we should add that the committee is also not in search of writing with realistic characters and plots set in our own times. Saul Bellow won the prize that could have gone to Updike, and there isn't a spare one left.

Certainly Updike does not write about fashionable, politically correct subjects. His work is peopled by contemporaneous, middle-class, white Americans—while his writing, in its detail, metaphors, symbols, and epiphanies, is rich with the history of literature and the culture. As even Erica Jong once observed, "The claim of some of his detractors—that he has *too* much technique—seems transparently envious to me. They know they will never write as well as he does, so they are saying, in effect, that he is too skilled and that this somehow stands in the way of 'greatness.'"

Updike was barely forty when some critics decided he had failed to live up to his early promise, and he has suffered for a quarter of a century under their charge that he fails to write about important subjects with a political slant. It is sometimes alleged that he "has little to say and expends his considerable verbal gifts on trivial matters." Jonathan Raban, for example, was positively venomous when *Bech* appeared in England:

> Updike's style—or ironic hyperbole, glittering, exact, yet thrown away with a casual, disarming grin—is as winning and as polished as the people from whose voice it derives. It evokes those clever, furry, peripatetic Americans who slip from theater foyers in London to the great libraries and museums of Europe; Guggenheim Fellowship holders, liberal democrats, occasional contributors to late-night chat programs on TV, mild anglophiles with an etiolated passion for seafood.

It is at least true that to appreciate Updike requires a willingness to forgo dramatic excitement. He is basically a short-story writer who does not have the gift for inventing great myths or sustaining plot development. Some writers do; some don't. Few both write well and invent great myths. James Joyce did both with the peregrinations of Leopold Bloom in *Ulysses*, and Dickens was incapable of setting pen to paper without inventing memorable myths. But Mary Shelley, for example, had only one of these gifts: She couldn't write to save her life, but her tale of Frankenstein's monster is myth-making at its greatest.

Perhaps that makes Updike a sort of counter-Mary Shelley. He will always turn down a potential myth in favor of investigating the look of a thing, the subtlety of emotional response, the shining through of the ideal into the ordinary.

Never mind. Updike knows why he is so fond of Bech. Bech is "the writer in me, creaking but lusty, battered but undiscourageable, fed on the blood of ink and the bread of white paper. The pleasure of dealing with him again . . . could not be resisted, so here he is again, *Bech at Bay*, even passé, seventy-five if a day, but my heart's irrepressible darling." ♦

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Parody

When congressional staff first saw investigator Charles La Bella's memo to Attorney General Janet Reno on the 1996 Clinton-Gore campaign finance scandal, about 70 percent of La Bella's report had been blacked out. —*News item*

REDACTED MEMORANDUM FROM CHARLES LA BELLA — PAGE 7 OF 94

~~but~~ any impartial observer will ~~find it impossible to~~ deny that the president has committed a serious felony.

According to notes taken by Witness A of a Spring 1995 meeting in the White House Map Room, President Clinton said: "~~It's important that the press think~~ I've had no contact with the Chinese. ~~But sell them the rockets, sure. And the computer guidance system, for all I care~~. By the way, what time is it? Five thirty? Someone want to order a pizza?

"Good, get ~~that Chinaman~~ Wang Chung ~~or whatever his name is~~ to come down and meet us in the White House ~~massage parlor~~. But tell him if he wants ~~the computer guidance system we'll expect ten thousand dollars to every state Democratic committee in the country. Mmm. This is good~~ pizza—he'll have to bring ~~a briefcase with non-sequential bills. Gimme~~ a napkin.

"One other thing: ~~that doddering old goat~~ Janet Reno can always be relied on to ~~do something stupid. I'm so sick of her crap about getting me to~~ uphold the law. Would you ~~believe it? How could I ever do something~~ like ~~nominate such~~ a ~~goody goody~~ cracker ~~gargoyle~~?

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